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THE NORTH WIND OF LOVE

I

BY COMPTON MACKENZIE

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POEMS 1907
KENSINGTON RHYMES

THE NORTH WIND OF LOVE

BEING VOLUME FOUR OF 'THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE'

By

COMPTON MACKENZIE

BOOK ONE

LONDON

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TO
WILLIAM MACKAY MACKENZIE
AND TO THE MEMORY OF
NORMAN STURROCK

My dear Willie,

Nine years have passed since I told you and our friend Norman that I was going to dedicate the last volume of 'The Four Winds of Love' to you both. Norman had left us before I had finished 'The West Wind'; and so, alas, it is only in memory of one of the best friends you and I have had that I can inscribe his name with yours at the head of 'The North Wind'. And even now this is only the First Book of it. True, the Second Book is already written, but the economic conditions of publishing make it necessary once more to split a complete volume into two books. I hope that the Second Book will appear early in 1945, which will be just ten years after I sat down to begin 'The Four Winds of Love'.

My original plan was to make this final volume start with the year 1926 and finish in 1934; but the planning of a novel of about a million words cannot be too rigid, and contemporary events suggested an extension of the period to be covered. 'The North Wind' therefore starts in January 1931 and finishes in March 1937. Book One stops at May 1933, and Book Two, which is almost exactly the same length, will continue without any lapse of time.

I cannot pretend that the circumstances of a World War are ideal for the writing of a long novel like this, but I had little hope of finishing 'The Four Winds of Love' in peace when I began it. In my dedicatory letter to Eric Linklater at the beginning of 'The East Wind' I hinted as much and took the risk, so I am not complaining, and I take this opportunity of thanking the really surprising number of readers who have sent me encouraging enquiries about the progress

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of the book. Nine years will have been a long time for a serial to run, and yet each successive volume so far has shown an increase of circulation; if the two books of 'The North Wind' hold their own with the others I shall be more than content.

Well, here's the end of a task which has often seemed beyond my power to complete. I only wish our friend Norman could be still in Edinburgh to read this dedicatory letter when you are reading it. How much we both miss him!

Always your affectionate,

Compton Mackenzie

SUIDHEACHAN

ISLE OF BARRA

March 25th, 1944

The North Wind of Love

THE DOOR OF THE RAILWAY CARRIAGE WAS FLUNG OPEN. THICK flakes of snow floated in upon the blast that swirled along the dimly-lighted platform.

"Mr Ogilvie?"

John from his corner acknowledged the station-master's inquiry.

"A telegram for you, sir."

He tore open the envelope, and read:

*Regret cannot reserve stateroom Lochiel goes into dock to-night
Puffin arrives Portrose five a.m. leaving five-thirty Purser
Lochiel.*

"Is there any reply you should like to send?" the station-master asked.

John shook his head a little ruefully.

"It's one of those unanswerable telegrams, I'm afraid. What time do we get to Portrose?"

"The train's due at eleven-fifteen, Mr Ogilvie. It's a terrible night, but I believe when you get over to the west you'll not be finding it so bad."

The station-master shut the door of the compartment, and the inrush of snow-laden air was quickly absorbed by the fug within.

"That's a bore, Padraig, we shan't be able to go straight on board when the train reaches Portrose," John announced. "It means staying at the inn, and getting up at a god-forsaken hour in the morning."

"I don't mind a bit," declared the fourteen-year-old boy with dark curly hair who was the only other occupant of the carriage. "I like every second I'm in the islands so much that I don't want to waste any time in sleeping." His deep-blue eyes glittered for a moment, and the warm colour of his cheeks grew warmer in a boy's embarrassment by the attempt to express his own emotion.

"You are so like your mother," John exclaimed.

"That's what Aunt Ellen always says."

"Well, you'll be spending all your holidays in the islands soon.

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We might be settled in by Easter, though I think it's wiser not to be too optimistic about that."

"Easter's rather early this year," said Padraig gloomily. "I expect they'll keep us at Ampleside for Holy Week. They do when Easter's early."

"Then you'll arrive with the puffins in April, but I wish we weren't going to arrive with the *Puffin* to-morrow."

The blurred lamps of the station were succeeded by the blackness of the January night from which, as it seemed to save themselves, snowflakes clung to the windows of the compartment and melted. On the other side the north wind drove the flakes so fast that the warmth of the panes was powerless to prevent their being gradually sealed with the white drift.

John put his feet up on the seat again, tucked the rug round him, and lit a meditative pipe. Padraig returned to the investigation by an amateur detective of the murder of a commercial magnate with a murky past in the conservatory of his Surrey house.

"Good story?" John asked.

"Pretty good. But I think I know who did the murder. At least I think it must be one of three."

"Not enough for a jury, Padraig."

The boy agreed vaguely. He had suddenly been faced by a clue from an entirely unexpected quarter.

John tried to remember if Padraig's father had ever been absorbed by detective stories. He had not become really intimate with Fitz until 1898 in the Michaelmas term after his own sixteenth birthday and by that time Fitz was already mastered by the passion of his life. Had he done all he could to secure that his son should be filled by that burning zeal for Ireland? It was a question he was asking himself more insistently because at present there was no sign whatever in Padraig of inheriting his father's fervour. It was true that old Mrs Fitzgerald's dying wish had been that Padraig should be guided away from the path his father had taken, and Ellen Fitzgerald's influence had been concentrated upon the fulfilment of that wish. For him to foster revenge and hatred in the child's heart would have been impossible even if he had desired to do so. Yet, during these last six years when he had been identifying himself ever more closely with the movement to rouse Scotland to the responsibility of nationhood he had had to ask himself whether he was

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carrying out the responsibility of nationhood in his own home.

John knocked out his pipe impatiently, and when Padraig looked up over his book at the sharp rapping he asked the boy if he was happy at Ampleside.

"Of course I am."

"You wouldn't rather be at school in Ireland?"

"Good lord, no! Why?"

"I've been thinking you haven't been in Ireland a great deal during these last few years."

"You took me there the summer holidays before last."

"And you wouldn't rather have gone to school there?"

"No, I'd much rather be at Ampleside."

"You'll be able to go to the National University when you finish with school. You must work well at your Irish."

"Well, I am working at my Irish with Father Columba. But I'd rather go to Oxford."

That was natural, John told himself. None of the boys at Ampleside would be talking in terms of future universities outside Oxford or Cambridge. The problem of Padraig's education which Ellen had thought so beautifully solved by sending him to the great Benedictine school in the heart of England had in fact been evaded, as the same problem had been for so long now evaded in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, by surrendering to the material advantage of a fashionable English education. Dr Johnson nearly two centuries ago had perceived the threat of it to the character of the Scottish laird. True, Padraig was at a Catholic school, but by Irish standards an English Catholic school was perhaps the greatest threat of all to the most extreme expression of patriotism. None was less tolerant of Irish aspirations than the English Catholic. Yet if he had a son to think about instead of a daughter, should he have the courage to deny him the hallmark? It would be easy enough to resist the temptation of Roedean; Eton would not be so easy. It was a little humiliating, within a couple of years of one's fiftieth birthday and completely convinced as one believed one's self to be that the English public-school education had degenerated into a menace to the national spirit, yes, a little humiliating not to be able to feel absolutely certain that one would possess the courage to flaunt it by the eccentric education of a son of one's own. However, for other reasons it was as well that Athene and he had never

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had a son. The conflict between her love of Arthur and Corinna, already such an anxiety to her, would have become an anguish if Corinna had had a younger brother, or worse still if Corinna herself had been a boy. It was a pity that old Mr and Mrs Langridge had outlived both of Athene's own parents, for if the Gilmers had been alive to deal with this preposterous entanglement of Arthur's his mother might not have felt compelled to go to America last month.

John took Athene's letter from his pocket and read it through in the way one does read a long letter whose news has not been too welcome, in the hope that from several re-readings one will manage to discover alleviations unnoticed at first.

Mrs Langridge met me in New York and was very insistent in her own seemingly unsistent way that I should go back with her at once to Boston and that together we should wrestle with Arthur. I said I was determined to see the young woman herself and that I wanted Arthur to make the introduction. It was a battle, but in the end Mrs Langridge retired, with the promise that if I decided to stay on into the spring I would stay with them in Boston.

Arthur himself reached New York two days ago and seems quite pleased now to stay with me at this hotel until he goes back to Harvard. I underline 'now' because he was obviously inclined at first to regard me as another tiresome obstacle between himself and his young lady, but now we have been presented to one another and he has been much relieved by my apparent reasonableness.

As a matter of fact the young woman herself, Blanche Halloway, is attractive enough, and if it were not for the warning offered by her mother, one might be content to say with a sigh that it might be worse. But Momma! And the future is complicated by the fact that Blanche admits to being six years older than Arthur, and is therefore at least that much nearer Momma. Moreover, Blanche is an only child, and Poppa is said to be dead. I should imagine he just faded away—by boat. I fancied a slight apprehensiveness at the back of poor Arthur's mind when as we left the Halloway apartment I said how like her mother Blanche was, and I was clever enough to add quickly what an agreeable woman Mrs Halloway was.

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My line is going to be sweet approval of everything except of course any suggestion of Arthur's getting married until he has graduated. And even Mrs Langridge's fondness won't lead her to approve of Arthur's getting married before he's twenty to a young woman who admits to twenty-five and is probably twenty-seven at least. But, John dear, if my plan is to succeed it will mean my staying over here for the present. It is true, I think, that you are now so much wrapped up in your political schemes and in the house on the island and in Corinna's education that my staying in America for a few months won't—I use almost going to write "won't be noticed", but I don't quite mean that. I mean that my presence at this time is not really indispensable, and I feel I ought to do what I can about this foolish adventure of Arthur's. Direct interference would be quite useless. The only chance is to bring out in the sweetest possible way all the worst in his young woman. She is going on the road in a new play that is being tried out and expects to be on Broadway in February. Arthur assures me she is a wonderful actress, but I do not feel he was cut out for a dramatic critic. I wonder why a young woman of certainly twenty-five should fall in love with a boy still two months away from twenty, for in justice to her I do believe she is in love with Arthur, absurd as that must sound to you and me. No doubt Momma thinks that as the prospective heir of his grandparents he is eligible, and that certainly will not tell against him in Daughter's eyes.

I wish sometimes I had listened to Arthur's own wishes and not made such a point of his going to Harvard. He is enjoying it now as a sophomore, but I think he found it a bit of an ordeal after Eton last year. Still, he is an American, and I had promised the old Langridges. They have really lived for this day through all the last ten years. It would have been too cruel to disappoint them. The danger now is that Mrs Langridge will give him this marriage as once upon a time she used to give him candy. And Mr Langridge who's over eighty and never did have a great deal of common sense has none at all now. Yet perhaps I should not say that, for at any rate he has managed to keep his money through this ghastly depression. He has invested most of it in chewing-gum, which is selling better than ever! My dear, I can't tell you the change that has come over my country.

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It's beyond anything I could have imagined possible. And everybody agrees that the prospect for this year of 1931 is worse than ever. We all wonder what will happen at the Presidential Election next year. Some people are talking of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Governor of New York, as a possible candidate of the Democrats. But I mustn't start discussing politics, for I know with what disdain you regard my political knowledge.

I had a letter from Leonora inviting me to go out and stay with them in California. But I intend to stay near Arthur as long as I remain over here. Sebastian has gone with Julius to Honolulu where they have some musical project. Leonora is longing for me to see the rest of her family and reminds me that I've not seen Wolfgang since he was a baby in arms. He's five now, and Veronica, who she says grows more and more like herself, is seven. I should like to see Monica most of all and compare her with Corinna.

I go on chattering about Leonora's children because I still feel so miserable about missing Corinna's tenth birthday. By the time this reaches you it will have come and gone, and the ten candles be burnt out. I hope she liked my present. Write and reassure me about this plan to stay on here for a while. You do think I'm right to do all I can to stop this threat to Arthur's future?

I'm longing to see the house on the island, and longing . . ."

"I think I've spotted the murderer," said Padraig suddenly. "Phew, it's pretty cold, isn't it?"

The train had been labouring up an incline for the last quarter of an hour and was running now through the dense swirl of snow that swept across the high moorland with blizzard force.

"What page are you at?" John asked.

But before answering Padraig had turned it, and his face fell.

"No, I haven't after all," he said.

"How do you know?"

"Because the fellow I thought was the murderer has been murdered himself now."

The boy plunged again into the mystery with knitted brows, and John sat back to think about Athene's letter. After all, perhaps in a way it was all to the good that Arthur should have provided

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her with this ardent preoccupation. Political passion was nearly always incommunicable to a woman, and when it was roused in her the result was seldom attractive. He had tried for the last five years to strike the happy mean between not letting Athene feel that he was excluding her from part of his life and running the risk of resentment over the knowledge that she was bored by his political theories and wishing he would cease to waste any more time in pursuit of an unprofitable dream. He had been aware that this was her attitude, but both of them had been able to maintain the pretence that it was not. Yet she had not been able to hide a brief dismay when he had told her of his desire to build a house on the island, for though he had assured her it was to be no more than a house in which to camp in greater comfort than they had found possible in the old shepherd's cottage, where almost every year they had spent a fortnight since he bought the islands over eight years ago, there was no doubt she fancied it might mean much more than that. And then in her letter she had spoken of his being so much wrapped up in Corinna's education that he would not miss herself. No doubt it had been inevitable that in joining Arthur again she should feel his was a greater demand upon her than anybody's. And if he were honest with himself must he not admit that Athene's preoccupation with her son was a relief? When first he had read her letter he had been touched by a pang of jealous vanity at the thought of her easy acceptance of the situation created by Arthur's absurd engagement. Now it began to appear like a piece of exquisite tact. By accepting her duty to Arthur she was relieving him of any prick of responsibility over the way he was directing the course of his life. Was she not accepting the cold passion of political theory with such equanimity as wives were so often called upon to show when their middle-aged husbands fell in love with younger women? More than that, had she not blessed his passion by what amounted to a surrender to him of their Corinna? *My staying in America for a few months won't—I was almost going to write "won't be noticed", but I don't quite mean that.* If she had not very nearly meant it she would not have been content to qualify her words. She would have deleted them. That she had qualified them was only to prevent any self-reproach on his part. She did in fact feel that her absence would be immaterial.

John took a pad of notepaper from his attaché-case and started

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a letter to Athene; but presently the evocation of recalled pictures like Corinna lighting her ten birthday candles at Nanphant or imagined scenes like Athene and Mrs Langridge meeting in New York allowed the rhythm of the train's progress to master his senses, and he dozed. When he woke an hour later the sky was clear, and the north wind had died down to quiet frost. John looked at his watch.

"Eleven o'clock. We shall be in Portrose in another quarter of an hour. What a nuisance we can't go straight on board," he grumbled. "But I'm glad you've finished your book," he added to Padraig.

"Why?"

"Because you'll be able to go right off to bed when we get to the hotel," John replied.

But when they reached the little hotel they found that the trick played by the *Lochiel* in departing for one of her periodical overhauls in dock and the non-arrival of her understudy the *Puffin* until next morning had put a strain upon the accommodation of the little Portrose Hotel. Padraig, rather to his disgust, was found a bed in an attic, but John was told he would have to make himself as comfortable as he could for the night in the smoking-room. He was depressed to find it already full, but Roderick Macleod, the host, assured him that most of the company had beds and that by midnight he and Mr Andrew Pirie of the Department of Agriculture, John's companion in exile from bed, would be able to make themselves comfortable enough. So John ordered himself a double whisky and after hastening Padraig up to bed with a couple of scones joined the company in the smoking-room.

It was a small faded room, seeming all the smaller because of the large sprawling pattern of the bluish-green wallpaper; and the gilt mirror over the fireplace had grown so tarnished with age and tobacco-smoke and sea-damp that the interior dimly reflected therein added nothing to the apparent space. On the wall opposite the door hung a large steel-engraving spotted with brown mould which represented a mythical Fitzgerald saving an almost equally mythical King Alexander from the antlers of an infuriated stag and thereby gaining the favour on which the fortunes of Clann Choinnich were

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supposed to have been built up. Above this engraving hung a pair of antlers mounted on a wooden shield, the *Cabar Fèidh* of the Mackenzies gained by the feat represented below. Under the engraving was a diminutive and ill-executed water-colour of Dunvegan Castle. The domination of the Mackenzies over the Macleods thus symbolized was an expression of Mistress Macleod's domination over her husband the innkeeper, she having been a Mackenzie before she married him. On either side of the engraving hung a sea-trout in a glass case, to both of which time had given a somewhat kippered appearance. The rest of the pictures showed the stock sentimentalized scenes of Highland life—sheep, shepherds, plaided lassies, shaggy cattle, hills, lochs, birds, and sunsets.

There was still one of the broken-sprung armchairs vacant, in which John sat down. From the sofa the face of a minister, who was lying with feet up, feet from which he had removed his boots and to which in default of slippers he had added a pair of thick grey woollen socks, bobbed up above the *Glasgow Herald* to reveal a ragged moustache, a complexion stained by excess of tea as fingers are stained by nicotine, and a pair of dark eyes inquisitive about the newcomer.

"Very cold," he observed.

"Very cold indeed," John agreed.

Then the moustache and yellow face and dark eyes were hidden again by the *Glasgow Herald* and John looked round the room at the other guests.

Four commercial travellers had just finished their last rubber of solo whist. Two of them who were rising early to make the crossing to the islands went off to bed; but one of the two that remained, a fat rubicund man in voluminous plus-fours of brown Harris tweed, came across and offered his hand to John.

"I met you once, Mr Ogilvie, in the Station Hotel at Inverness," he reminded him.

"I remember very well," said John, "It's Mr MacDougal, isn't it?"

The fat man beamed.

"Look at that now! Well, well, you have a very good memory, Mr Ogilvie. You'll be meeting many different people of all sorts, and yet you remembered my name. Well, well!"

Mr MacDougal's companion, a slim, small dark young man with

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slanting eyes alight with mockery, dug him in the ribs.

"Och, go on, Seumas, who'd ever the hell be likely to forget you? Man, you're a feature of the landscape."

"Isht! Less of your swearing, Alasdair MacPhee. There's a minister in the room. And you don't know who this gentleman is."

"I do not."

"This is Mr John Ogilvie, Alec. You're quick enough to blether about Home Rule for Scotland, but you don't know Mr Ogilvie. Very good, very good!" He laughed a high wheezy laugh of triumph over his companion.

"You're Mr Ogilvie the play-writer?" the dark young man asked, and the mockery vanished for a moment from his slanting eyes, leaving behind a burning, hungry look. "Well, this is a bit of an unexpected pleasure for me," he murmured, it seemed more to himself, as he offered his hand. *very friendly - very*

"There you are now, there you are," Mr MacDougal wheezed complacently. "What would you do without Big James MacDougal? You'd be nowhere at all at all. Not that I'm very much for Home Rule myself, Mr Ogilvie. What would we do without England?"

"What would you do without your belly, James?" Alec MacPhee jeered. "I'll tell you. You'd be driving that Morris Junior of yours much more comfortably than you can now."

"I don't know so much about that, Alec. I might drive her off the road altogether if I lost so much good ballast."

There was a general laugh at the fat traveller's retort, for by now the rest of the company were paying attention to the topic which had been raised.

"I've gathered from reports I've read of your speeches, Mr Ogilvie, that you advocate something a great deal more drastic than Home Rule in the usual sense of the words?"

This remark came from a lanky young man with a long upper lip and light reddish hair, in plus-fours of a modest Glen Urquhart tweed, seated in the corner by the fire.

"I don't think the Northern Ireland experiment has much to recommend it," John replied, "if that's what you mean by Home Rule in the usual sense of the words."

Before the new speaker could elaborate his point a bald burly

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man in a faded red kilt of the MacKinnon tartan barked with the muffled woof of a retriever with a ball in its mouth:

"Can't stand the idea of Home Rule. Sooner be ruled by Whitehall than Edinburgh lawyers. You fellows in the Department of Agriculture are bad enough already. Don't know what life would be if you got the bit between your teeth, what! How a'e you, Ogilvie? I think we were up at Oxford about the same time. You were at Exeter, weren't you? I was at Trinity. Read a lot about you, of course. Building yourself a house, they tell me, on the Shiel Islands. You'll find it a bit lonely, won't you? Can't think what you'll do with yourself all the time."

John shook hands with Major Lachlan MacKinnon of Drumdhu, a Skye laird of authentic lineage whose land had managed to stick to him in spite of the fears he had so often and so openly expressed ever since the end of the war that it would be raided. There was a limit, however, even to the appetite of land-starved men, and the barren moors and bogs of Drumdhu were beyond its capacity. Nor had Major MacKinnon been able to persuade the officials of the Department of Agriculture to acquire his inheritance. Even they whose optimism about land suitable for crops was almost infinite shied at Drumdhu.

While the laird was exchanging courtesies with John the long upper lip of Mr Andrew Pirie, the representative of the Department, lengthened in preparation for a defence of Edinburgh.

"I'm not altogether prepared to accept your condemnation of Edinburgh lawyers, Drumdhu," he said when the opportunity came. "I think it is generally admitted that nowhere in Great Britain is the law more expeditiously and more capably and more cheaply administered than in Edinburgh. I do not agree with Mr Ogilvie's very extreme conception of Scottish Home Rule, but I am bound to protest that one of the most potent arguments in favour of a measure, a strictly modified measure, of self-government is the great, the very great superiority of Edinburgh lawyers over any other legal body in the world. Mind you, I'm not saying that I accept such an argument. I'm a Government servant and therefore I do not consider myself at liberty to hold any positive political opinions."

"A lot of dummies," Alec MacPhee scoffed.

"That may be your opinion, Mr MacPhee," the official replied

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tartly. "But I don't fancy it's the opinion of the majority."

"The majority is made up of sheep," snapped MacPhee.

A white-bearded man who had been dozing in the corner woke up at the magic word.

"The prices were terrible at Dingwall last autumn. Terrible, terrible," he groaned. "Something will have to be done by the Government or we will all be ruined. And that reminds me, Mr Pirie, I don't agree at all with the idea the Department had about cross-bred Leicesters. They're too heavy—too heavy altogether. . . ."

"We are not discussing sheep, Mr Gillies," said Pirie. "We're discussing Home Rule."

The white-bearded man shook his head.

"Och, I think Mr Gladstone made a big mistake . . . a big, big mistake. I was a very young man at the time, but I always used to say then that he had made a big, big mistake. Mind you, I've never voted for the Tories. No, no, I wouldn't go so far as that. But I think Mr Gladstone . . ."

"You've lost fifty years since you fell asleep, Mr Gillies," Alec MacPhee broke in. He did not travel for an agricultural firm and did not have to handle tactfully a prospective customer. "We're talking about to-day."

"The Government will have to do something about it, or we'll all be ruined," the white-bearded man sighed lugubriously. "Och, well, I think I'll go up to my bed now that I've woken up. Good-night, gentlemen, good-night."

"There's one of your majority, Mr Pirie," observed MacPhee.

"Poor old Donald," MacDougal chuckled. "He's getting very old. But mind you, he's all there still. Och, my word, he's all there right enough. He gave me a very good order last time I was over in Loch Maddy. Now then, what about a dram, Mr Ogilvie? Ring the bell, Alec."

The host presented himself in the doorway.

"Three double whiskies, Mr Macleod."

"I'm sorry, Mr MacDonald, but the bar is closed."

"The bar is closed?" the fat man gasped. "It's only just twelve o'clock. Och, man, bring us four double whiskies."

"I couldn't serve you now, Mr MacDougal, the bar is closed."

The host withdrew.

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"There you are now," the fat man exclaimed, "that's what it is for a Macleod to marry a Mackenzie. She's locked the bar on him right enough. Well, well, well, isn't that terrible, right enough?"

The host's announcement that the life of the hotel was in abeyance broke up the gathering, most of the members of which would have to be up again before five to go on board the *Puffin*. The smoking-room emptied. On his way out the minister, who had been lying on the sofa reading the *Glasgow Herald*, stuck the paper under his arm that was carrying his boots and offered his hand to John.

"I'm glad to have met you, Mr Ogilvie," he said in the wind-blown accents of Lewis. "I'm not a Nationalist myself. No, I feel we cannot afford to break with our southern neighbours. But there's room for improvement in many directions, especially in the island of Lewis. Yes, indeed. There's no doubt of that. We feel we've been very badly neglected by the Government in Lewis. I'm no longer living in the island myself. I accepted a call to the United Free Church at Avonside. If you're ever along my way I'll be glad to give you a cup of tea. I've just lost my sister and I am crossing to Stornoway to-morrow. I did not manage to catch the boat to-day. There ought to be two boats a day to Stornoway."

This was too much for a Harrisman who turned back indignantly in the doorway.

"Two boats a day for Stornoway!" he gasped. "And three boats a week is enough for Tarbert."

"But, my friend, Lewis is not Harris."

"Och, *dhuine, dhuine*, indeed, and I hope it never will be," the Harrisman ejaculated devoutly, and with a courteous good-night in Gaelic that was given rather to the collar than to the wearer of it, he passed from the conversation.

"They've very much behind the times in Harris," the Reverend Duncan Morrison commented. "Good people, good people, but behind the times. Well, good-night, Mr Ogilvie. *Oidhche mhath*. Have you the Gaelic? I hope we will meet again. I gave you my card. I am between Greenock and Glasgow. Och, you're performing a great work in calling attention to the neglect of Scotland, Mr Ogilvie. I thought Mr Ramsay MacDonald would have tried to do a little more for his own country, but the

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world has corrupted him, they tell me. Anyway, he should bestir himself. Well, I hope we will meet again, Mr Ogilvie. Good night."

Presently the only guests left in the smoking-room were Andrew Pirie, Alec MacPhee and John.

"You're not going to bed just yet, Mr Ogilvie?" the slant-eyed young traveller asked with a touch of eagerness.

"I haven't a bed to go to," John replied. "So I shall stay here."

"You haven't a bed? Oh, that's not good enough. You'll take mine, Mr Ogilvie."

"I wouldn't dream of it."

"I have no room either," the Department of Agriculture official put in. "I don't remember when the hotel was so full."

"You can have my room, Mr Pirie," MacPhee suggested quickly. "Go on, man, take it," he urged when the official hesitated. "I want to talk politics with Mr Ogilvie. I'll stay on in here anyway for a while if Mr Ogilvie has no objection. You'd better take my room."

The notion of tolerable comfort for a few hours was more than Pirie could resist. Moreover, he had the dread every good civil servant has of finding himself involved in extremist politics of any kind.

"I hope you didn't mind me pushing myself upon your company like this?" MacPhee asked when the representative of the Department of Agriculture had departed to the bed he had surrendered to him. "But I couldn't let go of a chance like this, and I knew fine you might not like to take part in a general argument. Look now, let me pull up yon sofa in front of the fire and you can lie back and make yourself fairly snug. I'll put a couple of armchairs together for myself."

The younger man heaped more coal on the fire, moved the furniture around, and presently came back from an expedition into the domestic fastnesses of the hotel with pillows, a couple of plaids, and two brimming glasses of hot grog.

"Yon woman's a terror," he affirmed. "But my mother was a Mackenzie from the Black Isle like herself, and I know the way with that same clan."

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"My great-grandmother was a Macleod from Assynt," John told him.

"You're like me then, east and west. My father was a MacPhee of Coll, but I was born in Inverness myself. But that's not what I wanted to tell you, Mr Ogilvie. What I wanted to say was 'Go ahead, man.' I'm a member of the Party. I've been a member for three years, but we're too slow. 'Ca' canny' may be a good slogan for business, but it's no slogan at all for a country that's dying from the top down. And you know that. Weren't they all dead men blethering away in here to-night? I never heard you speak in public, but I've read all you've written about Nationalism and I know you're right when you say that it's too late to talk about Home Rule in terms of a plank on the Liberal platform and that Scotland must assert her sovereign independence or perish as a nation. Oh God, man, isn't it you that's right?"

"I think I am," John agreed. "But the problem is whether there's vitality enough left to feed the nation with the courage and endurance to assert those sovereign rights. So much of our Nationalist propaganda has been concentrated on telling people that if we managed our own affairs we should manage them more profitably; but there's no vision of true independence inspiring such an argument. When you press that kind of Nationalist you find he's using a municipal drain-pipe as a telescope for the future. His Scottish Parliament is hardly more than a glorified County Council. He's not prepared to sacrifice half a crown, much less imperil his own livelihood. And if he's not willing to face material loss he's right to be canny. I believe that the kind of independence a few of us dream of would involve ten and perhaps twenty years of hardship and bitter self-denial. I believe that any such complete separation from England as those few of us dream of would for a long while be fatal to all prosperity except the prosperity of the nation's soul. Those who contend that the maintenance of the Union is more than ever necessary at a time when the economic trend is toward amalgamation and when industry believes that the secret of success is rationalization—foul word for a foul process—are justified from their point of view. It maddens me to hear those sentimental Nationalists moaning about the flight of industry to the south, and hoping to check it by artificial legislation from Edinburgh instead of Westminster. Nothing can stem that flight of industry except

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so radical a readjustment of the economic life of this country as would involve not merely separation from England but probably even withdrawal from the Empire and any further subjection to Anglo-American finance."

"Not even you would advocate that on a public platform," said MacPhee.

"I've always asserted that it was a mistake to fetter the Party's declaration of its aims with the proviso that the country's sovereign independence was to be sought only within the British Commonwealth of Nations."

"Scotland never would go out of the Empire."

"Probably not," John agreed. "But it would be more logical to leave that decision to a free Scotland. I object for the same reason to this demand for a programme. It turns us into one more political party. If we have no confidence that sovereign independence will improve the re-creation of our national life, sovereign independence is not worth winning. But as I said just now, the doubt always at the back of my mind is whether the vitality is really there, whether it is not too late. Tell me, MacPhee, why do you think independence worth winning?"

"Didn't you say just now that it would be soon enough to say why when we were after winning it?"

"Ah, that didn't mean I haven't my own vision of a free Scotland," John replied. "The point I was making was that we could not afford to present the country with a compromise programme designed to please the greatest number of people and so win their votes. Let me put it this way—if to-morrow you were offered a job in London with a salary of a thousand a year and the prospect of a certain steadily-rising income, would you take it?"

The younger man pitched the stub of his cigarette into the fire as if with it went a part of himself.

"I suppose I would."

"You wouldn't feel that such a surrender of your own independence made it rather ridiculous to worry any more about the independence of your country?"

"I wouldn't want to go to London, but what kind of a chance like that would I ever find in Scotland to-day?"

"In a Scotland that cut itself off completely from England you

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mightn't be able to earn even half of what you're earning in it to-day."

"May I ask you a question, Mr Ogilvie?"

"Ask away," John told him.

"If the independence of Scotland meant that never another play of yours was put on the stage in England, would you still work for that independence?"

"I've asked myself that question and I think I can say 'yes' with complete conviction. But our two cases are not really similar. I have the advantage, because in the first place an artist always has at any rate a little more personal independence than a man on a salary, and in the second place—how old are you?"

"I'm twenty-two."

"I shall be fifty in October next year. I have enjoyed my economic opportunity. But thirty years ago on the last day of the nineteenth century old Torquil Macleod of Ardvore told me that I ought to settle in Assynt and devote myself to working to preserve the old Highland habit of life and way of thought. Perhaps if he had encouraged my political views, which were then very much what they are to-day, I might have thought his suggestion less impractical. But old Ardvore abhorred the notion of Home Rule and as for separation he thought it merely fantastic. For him Home Rule was synonymous with radicalism, and to a Highland laird of thirty years ago radicalism sounded as unpleasant as socialism sounds to-day. I don't have to tell you that the profound opposition to the national movement among the lairds and business men of Scotland is entirely inspired by a fear of socialist experiments at the expense of their pockets. Our friend Drumdhu declared just now that Home Rule would mean the Highlands being ruled by Edinburgh lawyers, and he prefers Whitehall. Mind you, I think there's a good deal to be said for that point of view. Well, to come back to what I was telling you, the notion of settling down in Assynt at the age of eighteen to learn Gaelic, encourage homespun, and preserve the old Gaelic culture seemed to me an idle dream."

"So it would have been if there was nothing left to preserve it for," MacPhee agreed.

"That's what I told Ardvore. He wanted me to take a wife from our own people and bring up a large family in the traditions of our race. I remember I told him I would only do that if the

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traditions of our race could be practically demonstrated to the rest of the world. And Ardvore said they had been practically demonstrated in the building up of the Empire."

MacPhee muttered an ejaculation of disgust.

"Oh yes," John continued, with a smile. "I felt exactly as you feel about it, because at that date I was just suffering from the first violent reaction to the Boer War. You can't feel a bit more strongly the reaction against the mood of the Great War."

"Do you know Glen Strathfarrar?" the young man asked.

"That lovely wilderness!" John sighed.

"Two hundred men from Glen Strathfarrar fought in the wars against Napoleon, fifty men fought in the Crimea, two men fought in the last war, and if there's ever another war there'll be none to fight in it from Glen Strathfarrar. *A dhia*, the making of the Empire left Scotland like a shot salmon. Small wonder you turned your back on Ardvore's proposal."

"And then I met Norman MacIver," John went on. "Did you ever come across him?"

"The tailor in Melvaig?"

"Yes."

"It's he that has the eyes to see," MacPhee averred.

"He has indeed. It was from him I heard first of Michael Davitt's idea that the Highlands and Islands should throw in their lot with Ireland. But he argues it is too late now to save the *Gaidhealtachd*."

"It's not too late, it's not too late," MacPhee cried.

"Yet you would take a thousand a year job in London, Alasdair."

The young man's eyes lighted up at hearing himself called by his Christian name.

"Not if I thought there was a chance to give Scotland back its life," he declared.

"With what?"

"With my own blood if that would serve."

A silence fell. The coal in the grate subsided, and flames licked the sooty mouth of the chimney. John looked back to the door of the inn in Lochinver and to the thin January sunlight in which the old laird of Ardvore was waving him farewell just thirty years ago. And anon from the jolting omnibus he was watching the isolated blue-grey shape of Suilven, snow-sprinkled on the summit,

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recede and sink out of sight below the bleak rolling moorland like a ship below the horizon.

It seemed to him that now for the first time he was beholding it again.

"Tell me about yourself, Alasdair," he said, breaking the silence.

"There's little enough to tell. My father is a grocer in Inverness. The idea was that I would become a minister. My mother came from the only village in the Black Isle where they keep the Gaelic. Her father is Alasdair Mackenzie. He has written plenty Gaelic poetry. I don't suppose you've heard of him."

"Wasn't he crowned bard at one of the Mòds?"

"He was."

"I've read some of his work. A genuine poet."

"A better poet than most of them, perhaps," the grandson allowed. "But his poetry ran to religion, which is why my mother was so set on my becoming a minister. My own idea was different, and my career at Inverness Academy was not very brilliant. I made it clear that it would be a big waste of money to send me to Aberdeen University. Luckily my elder brother Donald was already in the shop, and I got a job as traveller for Loudoun and Gray, the big Glasgow biscuit-makers. Och, it's not a bad job. It takes you into the heart of the country. I cover the west from Lochinver to Mallaig with Skye and the Long Island and the Small Isles. I've just driven through Glenmoriston and Glenshiel. It's great in the winter-time. There's not much snow here in Portrose; but, man, it lay deep in the glens. My Austin seemed just a wee toy and myself a bairn's doll."

"Are you a poet yourself?" John asked.

"I have written some Gaelic verse, right enough. But it frightens the An Comunn people. The Highland Society is a very respectable body of men, Mr Ogilvie. They don't admit any violent political emotion later than the '45."

"I don't think we must laugh at An Comunn too much. The language would have been in a much worse way without the work they've been doing for the last forty years."

"Och, what's the annual Mòd now? Just a society function the success of which is judged by the amount of money it makes. And anyway, what is the use of keeping a language alive for a dying people? Look round this room, Mr Ogilvie. Doesn't it sum up

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the Highlands of to-day? That steel engraving of a legend which was never worth believing anyhow—a nineteenth-century piece of snobbery spotted by damp and flies. That washy water-colour of Dunvegan hardly fit for a schoolgirl's autograph album. Those two sea-trout to catch the eye of the rich sportsman and persuade him the hotel's bad food is compensated for by the fishing obtainable in the land of bens and glens and heroes. Those rosy maidens from the lone shieling who are smiling so sweetly because next week they'll be meeting their friends again on the Jamaica Bridge in Glasgow. And that meditative shepherd! Ay, ay, meditating on the prices his hoggets fetched at Dingwall last week. That's the reason for so noble an expression of Celtic gloom and dignity. Land of bens and glens and heroes! What is it now? Rabbits and bracken; Indian pedlars on bicycles hawking cheap silks and french-letters; inshore fishing destroyed by English trawlers; unemployment benefit instead of the benefit of employment; education planned to make good North Britons but bad Scotsmen, and to fill the minds of children with the belief that a city man is a bigger fellow than a countryman; ministers without scholarship and scholars without religion; tinned salmon and tinned lobster; Midlothian porridge like clay and Glasgow bread like chalk; plus-fours, Government officials, pink asbestos tiles, and the *People's Journal*."

"Yes, but can't the same kind of thing be said about England?" John suggested. "I'm not convinced—I wish I were!—that the independence of Scotland would change these signs of what is called progress. I've been rather disappointed by the way Ireland has developed since the Treaty. It's rather too much of a not very good imitation of England at present. The pillar-boxes have been painted green, but their shape remains. And as much may be said of their legal and financial and economic system. They've all been painted green, but in truth the shape was better suited to England's cruel red. True, there's a censorship of books, contraception is officially discouraged, and it is recognized that the Irish language must prevail; but the country has not shaken off that air of faded provincialism which hangs over our own country. Contemporary Dublin is more a metropolis than Edinburgh, largely, I think, because it was farther away from Belfast than Edinburgh from Glasgow and therefore avoided the complacency about its own superiority with which the nearness of Glasgow has infected Edin-

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burgh. Princes Street has always seemed so obviously an authentic metropolitan thoroughfare compared with Sauchiehall Street that Edinburgh people have not noticed the rapid decline of Princes Street during the last twenty-five years. I think Perth should be the capital of a sovereign Scotland, Alasdair, and the King crowned again at Scone."

"Will a sovereign Scotland want a coronation?" the young man asked. "I think a sovereign Scotland must be a republic."

"I should prefer an autocratic monarch until the country has emerged from provincialism," said John. "I wish the Prince of Wales would give up trying to persuade the people of these islands of their imperial destiny and take the throne of Scotland, leaving his brother to rule constitutionally over all the rest."

"The Prince of Wales! You're not serious, Mr Ogilvie?"

"Perfectly serious. Scotland needs an autocrat, but you can't expect so proud a country to accept a Mussolini. And the kind of revolution that's necessary in our national life could not be carried out by following the traditions of the English Civil Service. That's the mistake they've made in the Irish Free State. When the Treaty was signed the civil servants threw down their pens and sat back to watch the new State collapse under the administration of young men in Fedora hats and Burberrys with an automatic in one pocket and a packet of gaspers in the other. Unfortunately the young men picked up the pens with their nicotine-stained fingers and proceeded to get on with the job, and almost before they knew it, had turned into good little bureaucrats. They had dyed the red tape green, and though green tape may be better it remains tape and has the same capacity for strangulation. Let me give you a few of my ideas about the revolution I fancy for this country, and if you agree with them you'll have to agree that they couldn't be put into effect by a nation which relied on Parliamentary institutions. The whole world is passing through a period of upheaval. It will be time to return to Parliamentary institutions when the fires below the surface are again quiescent."

"Isn't that what's been happening in Italy?"

"Yes, and so far the experiment has been in many ways a success. The trouble there, however, is that Mussolini like all self-made dictators must continually go forward or run the risk of a reaction. If he comes to an end of his capacity for useful internal reform he

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will have to maintain his position by external aggression. Hence this wearisome braggadocio in all his speeches about Italy's mission in the world. If he were a truly wise and great man he would retire from the helm now and restore to Italy a free Parliament which would know how to profit by the example he has set of constructive energy. That's why I made the point about an autocratic monarch. He'd run less risk of having his head turned by his own position. In any case he could not hope to compensate for any failure of internal reform by a policy of external aggression. Even if the spirit of the people of Scotland was inclined in that direction their geographical situation would make such ambitions absurd. Obviously Scotland would be no more likely to contemplate aggression than Norway, and it would have to make every effort to achieve self-sufficiency."

"To feed ourselves in fact," Alasdair observed.

"That first of all, of course," John agreed. "And it would involve nationalization of all the land as an immediate first step, or as I should prefer to say the restoration of the trusteeship for all the land into the hands of the King, by whom the tenure of it would be granted on a system of mutual obligation. Private ownership would never be freehold, but so long as it was used for the common good no man could be dispossessed of his tenure."

"What about the deer forests? How could they be used for the common good?"

"Well, first of all we must admit that there *are* great tracts unfit for cultivation; but, as once upon a time, all sporting rights would again be vested in the King, and it would lie with him and his advisers to decide what was the best use to make of such land for the common good. At any rate, the private sporting estate would have to go, and the rights of all salmon rivers would have to revert to the trusteeship of the King. That salmon would require protection is obvious, but not less obvious is the protection required by our other fish. With the support of Norway we should be able to secure the thirteen-mile limit for territorial fishing waters that was to be asked from the North Sea Convention by the Scottish Fisheries Act of 1896."

"1896?"

"Yes, and never put into full operation all these twenty-five years through the opposition of the big English fishing interests.

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We cannot afford to ruin the spawning grounds to keep the cities of the south supplied with cheap fish. We have seen our best herring market destroyed because the British Government has had a quarrel with the Soviets. We want Russian wheat in return for our fish. The grass growing on the quays of Leith will not make bread. But mind you, Alasdair, we'll have to eat more oatmeal, and not this fine-ground Midlothian stuff. Do you realize that you have never tasted proper porridge? Twenty-five years ago the wash that's served as porridge now in Scotland would have been considered uneatable even at a railway meal. Scots used to moan because they couldn't get real porridge over the Border, and now they all eat Anglicized porridge from the Cheviots to the Pentland Firth. And we must grow more rye. The black bread of Germany at which we scoff is worth ten times that foul chalk-like Glasgow bread you mentioned. That's fit for nothing except to make plaster tombstones for its victims."

"And all the people like it better than home-made bread, *amadain truaigh!*"

"Poor fools indeed," John echoed.

"That's going to be a big problem. Whatever we make of the land it will be hard nowadays to persuade people not to leave it for the towns."

"That desertion of the country for the cities seems a world-wide tendency, and when country people cannot escape from what they believe to be a prison they import into the country as much as they can of city life. Hence your tinned lobster and your cheap silks. I believe that if transport were made free or at any rate if the rates were equalized on the same principle as the post the population would adjust itself much more equally. It's not the time that tells against travel but the money it costs. I would have sixpenny and threepenny electric trains worked by our own water-power running almost continuously night and day, and sixpenny boats from the islands. And I would charge freightage by weight and space only, regardless of distance. Of course, that would mean nationalization of the railways and all ferry services."

"Wouldn't that mean burdening the State with a huge capital investment?"

"No, because with the death of every holder of railway shares his shares would revert to the country. The original capital in-

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vested in railways has long been paid back in interest. Furthermore, arterial roads would have to be constructed along which people would be prohibited from building."

"And what about the finance?"

"The King's money should be the King's money again, and of course all banks would have to be nationalized and amalgamated in a Royal Bank of Scotland. I've a notion we might require a double rate of currency—one for internal and the other for external requirements. The value of the latter would depend on our export. For what the country consumed itself of its own produce prices and wages could be regulated to encourage at once producer and consumer. More or less what I'm advocating is what is called Social Credit—the creation of purchasing power for the community. Did you ever read any of Major Douglas's books?"

"I never have."

"You'd find it worth while."

"But what would we do about our share of the present National Debt?"

"I am afraid we should have to repudiate our share of that, though I think it might be possible to make a fair bargain by leasing our harbours to England, the harbours I mean suitable as naval bases."

"That would mean the Firth of Forth," said Alasdair. "A little ignominious for the capital of an independent Scotland."

"But Perth is to be the capital of my Utopian Scotland. No, obviously one would prefer not to lease the naval bases, but I don't see how England would get on without them, and if war ever broke out again between England and Germany, it would certainly mean their occupation by English naval forces, with all the tiresome complications of violated neutrality. I saw enough of that at Salonica in 1915."

"But wouldn't that drag us into one of England's wars?" Alasdair still objected.

"No small nation can ever be safe from violation in a general war, and war between England and Germany would always mean a general war."

"Well, it'll be a long while before we have another Great War, Mr Ogilvie."

"I think it will, but I doubt if it'll be as long as all that. Let

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me see, it was forty-three years, wasn't it, between the end of the Franco-Prussian war and the beginning of the Great War? Forty-three and eighteen make sixty-one. Say 1961 for the next war, when I shall be seventy-nine."

"And I'll be fifty-two. Gosh! What an age!"

"Not really so tremendous, I fancy," said John, with a smile. "1961! That gives us only thirty years from now to prepare a Scotland to meet it."

"At the rate we're moving now we won't even have a Parliament of our own by then. Och, when independence comes it'll be a wake we'll be holding in honour of the happy event. But go on with your ideas for the dying body in case we manage to save it from death."

"Well, to go back to my autocratic monarch. The corollary to that is the administration of the country by commissions directly dependent upon the central authority. Mind you, I don't look forward to that as a perpetual form of administration. I should hope that within a reasonably short time the country would be fit to assume local government."

"And a Parliament?"

"Oh yes, but not selected territorially. My Parliament should be representative of professions and trades, for in this Utopia nobody would be allowed to draw a farthing from unearned increment and therefore vested interests would not require representation. In fact there would be no vested interests. All the heavy industries would be nationalized and individual trading encouraged by prohibiting such abominations as chain-stores or even general stores of any kind."

"What would happen to a firm like Loudoun and Gray?"

"The biscuit-makers—the people you travel for?"

"Yes."

"If they could hold their own in export they'd be encouraged in every way, but I wouldn't allow their wares to be sold in the country itself. I'd want my bakers in proportion to the population, urban and rural."

"I'll be out of a job then."

"No, because I'd have a consular service all over the world, the members of which were to all intents commercial travellers for the country's export industries. A fellow like you who was good at

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his job could count on a decent income for thirty years and a good pension at the end of it. But we've got away from my Parliament. Party government would be impossible because, as I said, it must be representative of professions and trades elected by their guilds—journalists, farmers, ploughmen, motor mechanics, joiners, doctors, and so on. And it would be strictly a Parliament to ventilate the needs of the nation as a whole. It would be a mobile Parliament sitting in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, St Andrews, Aberdeen, Inverness, Fort William, Ayr, and Dumfries in turn. But it would pass laws for a permanent Government to administer. No Cabinet. None of this façade of administration made up of figure-heads. No Ministers of State."

"But how would such a Parliament have any control over the permanent officials, Mr Ogilvie?"

"By the laws it debated and passed. And those laws would not be framed by lawyers with the intention of sustaining the privilege of the caste. Indeed, no lawyers would be allowed to indulge in private practice. They would all be paid civil servants, and injustice would be guarded against by preserving trial by jury and giving the appointment of all judges to Parliament, such appointments being revocable by every new quinquennial Parliament. A judge or sheriff convicted of corruption would be banished for life to St Kilda. Indeed every conviction of a State official, even a Member of Parliament, would carry a life sentence of banishment. The highest paid state profession would be the teacher's, and admission to it would involve the most rigorous training and most severe tests of ability. The headmaster of a Scottish Academy would be a greater figure in the esteem of the country than the Lord Justice Clerk is to-day."

"Yes, I begin to see what you're after."

"I need hardly say that there would be no Stock Exchange. The financial system in any case would make gambling in stocks and shares impossible."

"What about religion?"

"Complete toleration, but of course no State-aided Church and therefore disestablishment of the Church of Scotland."

"Disendowment too?"

"No, but all endowments would be restricted to the internal currency of the country. My theory is that no Church flourishes

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spiritually when it is flourishing materially. I should allow more time for religious teaching in schools, but I should demand from teachers of the various Churches as high a standard of equipment as I should demand from lay teachers, and that, as I have indicated, would be very high indeed. What shocks me most in Scotland is that the qualifications for ministers and school teachers are lower than any others."

"And what about our Sabbath?"

"Until noon a strictly holy day, and after noon a holiday in the best sense of it. And not a Sunday paper should be published until the evening. But I have revolutionary ideas about papers. For instance, I would allow no advertising in newspapers except small personal advertisements of property for sale and situations vacant. Advertising papers would be prohibited from publishing anything except recognized fiction."

"What about the big English newspapers?"

"Taxed twopence a copy and admitted only by post."

"And films?"

"Oh, such a rigorous censorship and a swingeing tax on American films! However, we shouldn't be able to afford to import foreign films except from France and Scandinavia. But we'd make plenty of our own. No censorship at all for plays or books. Spirits and ale reasonably taxed, and licensing hours widely extended, but no man to pay for his own or anybody else's drink except with a special currency which would be restricted to a reasonable sum and which would not be issued to him if he abused it. Of course, all distilleries and breweries would be nationalized."

"Mightn't teetotallers traffic in their currency?"

"I think that could easily be dealt with."

"And what about the Gaelic?"

"Well, of course I'd like to follow the example of the Irish Free State and make Gaelic compulsory all over the country, but I think it's too late for that. I feel we should have to concentrate on saving the language in the Highlands and Islands. To that end I would insist that every Government official employed on service in Argyll, Perthshire, Invernessshire, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, and the Islands should speak Gaelic; that all official communications should be printed in Gaelic and English; that every signpost should give the Gaelic name greater prominence with the English

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name in brackets and smaller letters underneath; that every school teacher, priest, minister, and doctor should be a Gaelic speaker; and that all teaching should be given in Gaelic up to the age of twelve. By the way, I would make education compulsory until eighteen years, and have four grades of school—five to eight, nine to twelve, thirteen to fifteen, and sixteen to eighteen. I should have a Gaelic University which I should aim to make the centre of Gaelic scholarship in Europe, in the hope that Catholics and Protestants would agree to share equally in its administration. I said just now that it is too late to make Gaelic a compulsory language all over the country, but I *would* make Gaelic a compulsory language course at schools from the age of five to fifteen. I should also make Spanish and German for boys compulsory from nine onwards to eighteen. By the way, I would abolish co-education at schools, but continue it at the universities. The compulsory languages for girls would be French and German, and if by the time they reached the fourth-grade school they were certified as fit for the trouble of intensive education with a view to entering the Government service, I should make Russian and a Scandinavian language compulsory.”

“Russian and a Scandinavian language for girls!” Alasdair exclaimed.

“Women have reached a position nearer to equality with men in the Scandinavian countries, Finland, and Russia than elsewhere, and Scotswomen who wanted to serve their country abroad could be more usefully employed in such countries. Naturally throughout this long education from five to eighteen boys and girls incapable of benefiting by it would be weeded out and taught a craft instead, so far as possible at the choice of the child. Similarly, admission to a university would depend on the fitness of the candidate for another four years of education, which would include for every pupil travel in Europe for six months of the year at the expense of the State or, as I should prefer to say, of the King. The ideal at which I should aim is that at the age of twenty-two no young Scotsmen or Scotswomen could complain that they had not been given an equal chance to win for themselves a career. Of course, private education would be abolished. And I would also make all professional sport illegal. Indeed, I should like to abolish all idle games after childhood, and substitute walking, forestry, shooting, and sailing, according to the locality and the season. There

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would be no schools in cities and all city children would be boarded out, with free travel for their parents to visit them continually. In due course I hope every city and town would be destroyed and rebuilt with a view to the next generation. What was old and beautiful would be preserved, but there's little enough left worth preserving in most of the cities and towns of Scotland. Moreover, what was left should serve as animated history for young and old. A beautiful house of the eighteenth century should have nothing in it later than the eighteenth century. The very flowers in the garden and the dresses of the custodians should be in time with the rest. They would in fact be museums. Every pre-Reformation ecclesiastical building left—and there are few enough—should be handed back to the Catholic Church, and no new church, Catholic or Protestant, should be erected without the approval of the architectural advisers of the King. The smallest village in the country should have a library. The working week should be forty-two hours, which with all machinery in the hands of the King would give work to all, but not too much work, and the productive capacity would be increased. Unemployment would be unthinkable."

"But—mind you, I'm not saying it's not a great idea—but would people take kindly to mining and smelting and loading and all the heavy kinds of manual labour if they were given the chance of another kind of a life?" MacPhee asked.

"I know the usual argument is that miners are happier as miners and that to try to offer them a life of wider opportunity is a mistake. But that seems to me a counsel of despair. If the result of machinery is to make men the slaves of it I think it would be better to destroy machinery. But man cannot turn back. We have machinery, and what we have to do is to use it to the advantage of all. If machines belonged to all and were developed for the benefit of all, I believe that instead of using labour-saving devices for the profit of the few they could and would be much further developed for the betterment of the many. My educational scheme would not entail forcing any child beyond his natural bent. The main object would be to draw out of every child the best in him—the literal meaning of education—and give him the fullest opportunity to make the best of the best that was in him. I should expect that the great majority would fail to justify the education available, but that would not imply any slur upon them, and those incapable of giving more than

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craftsmanship or even the lowest forms of manual labour should be allowed the chance to develop their abilities to the best advantage of themselves and of the kingdom and commonwealth of Scotland. And such a country owning all its machinery could surely make any work tolerable, and at the same time secure to all its workers a richer leisure.

"The word liberty is the most abused in the language and I hesitate to use it, but by destroying the illusory liberty which men now enjoy I would seek to secure a truer liberty. For instance, we talk of the liberty of the Press, but in point of fact it has vanished long ago. The Press may in times of peace criticize the existing government, but it is at the mercy of its advertisers, and its object as a whole is to drug the people into remaining content with the state of life into which it has pleased capital to call them. Hence the careful stimulation of sport. The old Roman *plebs* was kept quiet with bread and games. Our Press pursues the same policy to-day. It's hard work in summer because in trying to build up cricket the Press has so nearly destroyed the game itself that it will hardly last for another generation. The experiment with professional football has been much more successful. A nation which thinks that the news of the world in the six o'clock bulletin is a tiresome postponement of the football results is marching in blinkers along the road to ruin.

"But that's enough of Utopia. The cold facts of the present are that a Labour Government is in power dependent for further existence on its willingness to do nothing. One Scotsman in five is vaguely conscious that something is wrong with Scotland; one Scotsman in fifty is wondering whether the privilege of having a Scottish Prime Minister at the head of a Westminster Government is as much use to Scotland as an English Prime Minister might be at the head of an Edinburgh Government; one Scotsman in five hundred is convinced that the first step to prevent further decay of the national life is to denounce the Act of Union and draft a fresh deed of partnership on the lines of those drawn up with the Dominions; one Scotsman in five thousand believes that Dominion status is an unworthy substitute for the independence of a sovereign State, and that his country would be wise to cut itself free now from a declining concern and start afresh upon its own; but not one Scotsman in fifty thousand is prepared to take a step toward the

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achievement of such a purpose beyond putting a little extra fervour into the singing of *Scots Wha Hae* at the end of a Bannockburn Commemoration."

"I never went to one of yon affairs."

"Oh, you should. They provide a brief illusion while they last that the heather is beginning to blaze. But when the end of the long June day comes one realizes that the commemoration of Bannockburn has been a soporific. Such an expense of spirit about the past ends always in leaving the present a waste of shame. I once heard Tim Healy say that the difference between the Irish and the Scottish attitude towards England was that the Irish had never had a Bannockburn. And there are times, Alasdair, when I wish that we had never had a Bannockburn, of which nowadays the only martial quality left is to provide a battle for historians and topographers about its true site."

"What made you a Scottish Nationalist, Mr Ogilvie?"

"Oh lord, Alasdair, what a question to ask a bedless man at this hour of a winter's night with the prospect of the Minch before him at half-past five in the morning!"

The younger man rose from his chair and pulled back the blind to look out.

"The wind has died right away. It's a clear calm night. You'll have a fine crossing," he said. Then letting the dark-red curtains fall back into place he took his seat again by the fire, and leaning over stirred it to a blaze. "You must forgive me, Mr Ogilvie, but you see, it's a great occasion for me meeting you like this, and I'd wondered so much about you. It's easy enough to understand why somebody like me should be a Nationalist. A fellow like me has a kind of idea that he might cut more of a figure in a small independent country than he could hope to in the British Empire. Och, I know how we Scots are supposed to run the British Empire, and it may be true, but there's one part of it they don't seem able to run and that's Scotland itself. I suppose it's true in a way that some of the Scottish Nationalists get publicity out of their politics they'd never get out of their business or profession. But you've made your name. If you believe in this cause your faith in it must have an inspiration. You've not identified yourself with it for what you can get out of it. And I don't think it's just because you have ideas about the way you think a country should be run, and that Scotland

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offers a good opportunity for experimenting."

"You're determined to extract a confession, I see," said John, "And I gather you won't just be content to accept me as one of those Scots in every five thousand who is convinced that the only way to keep his country from degenerating into a provincial appendage to England is to restore that sovereign independence she shamefully signed away in that fatal April of 1707?"

"Well, you see, Mr Ogilvie, I can't understand why a man should worry himself over what happened two hundred years ago and more to a country to which he owes nothing."

"Yes, I suppose it is rather perplexing to the outsider," John agreed. "I'll try to explain myself. First of all, it's a question of blood. My father may be an English judge, but his father was a Scots minister and his mother was a Frenchwoman. My own mother, incidentally, was Cornish. My great-grandfather married an Assynt woman—Isabel Macleod, whose grandfather Roderick Macleod of Sandwater was one of five Macleods who accompanied his cousin Torquil Macleod of Ardvore in the Prince's Year. I did not know this when I was a boy, but I was a fervid Jacobite in my sympathies, and from my ancestors on my mother's side I inherited a devotion to the House of Stuart. And the Ogilvies fought under Montrose. That was always a particular satisfaction to my boyish fancy. Well, Jacobitism may long have been a synonym for romantic absurdity, but I think there's something wrong about the boy of Scottish blood whose boyhood is not coloured by his country's history, and there's something equally wrong with the boy who is incapable of passionate partisanship. Usually as boys grow older an ever-widening experience of the present obliterates these bookish excitements; but I held fast to my Jacobitism until an Irish school friend of mine made me feel its depressing lack of any possible practical development by contrasting my aspirations with his for Ireland. When I was just eighteen I went up to stay with Torquil Macleod in Assynt. I've told you about that and of my meeting with the tailor of Melvaig. Well, after that those early dreams did begin to fade gradually; but my friend Fitzgerald's dreams did not grow dim, he became one of those young Irishmen who was reprieved from death but sentenced to penal servitude for life after the Easter Rising. I was in Salonica at the time and feeling strongly about small nations and the way we were letting down

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those splendid Greeks who had thrown away everything to follow Venizelos. After the war I was sickened by the English treatment of Ireland. My friend was killed finally by Free State troops. He was a Republican. And just about the same time in 1922 came the betrayal of Greece by England and what seemed to me the feeble abrogation of her own imperial mission in favour of party politics."

"Imperial mission? How came you to worry about England's imperial mission, Mr Ogilvie? I think we've done enough in England's wars."

"I know. One always thinks that in peace-time. But there's a magic about England when war comes which lures one into it. And I did genuinely feel that as between the English and the Germans the English cause was the better cause. But after the war the country went back to the principle of anything for a quiet life. I don't believe that was the prevailing mood in the days of Elizabeth or during the next two centuries except for a brief period after the Restoration. It was this growing moral and mental and even physical laziness which depressed me with the conviction of a decadence at the heart of the national life. We see it in the French, but we do not see it in ourselves. There has been nothing in Britain or in France comparable with the surge of life in Italy which produced Fascism, and I fancy that a similar surge of life is flowing through Germany and Russia which may finally sweep across Europe. Now, although both Fascism and National Socialism are superficially hostile to communism, the inspiration of all three is revolt against the form of present-day capitalism. The Germans have a particular name for it. They call it *Loan Capitalism*. I regard them as manifestations of the same impulse to revolt against the domination of capitalism, which is ruining the world for youth as a paralysed father so often ruins life for his family. Social Credit is another manifestation of the same impulse to revolt. Unfortunately the control of the Labour Party by the trade unions blinds it to the process that is going on in Europe. The Labour leaders believe that communism is something with which they can afford to be more sympathetic. They do not want communism in this island, but they think it's very good for Russia. On the other hand they think Fascism and National Socialism are very bad for Italy and Germany, and because certain anti-Labour papers have by some strange mental process persuaded themselves that Fascism

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and National Socialism offer a bulwark against communism they feel positive that the forces of capitalism are behind the Italian and German movements. They feel the same suspicion of Pilsudski and Poland and no doubt will soon be equally suspicious of Portugal, which is likely to prove the most successful political experiment in Europe if the Spaniards do not pull off a red revolution and infect Portugal."

"I know nothing about Portugal," Alasdair MacPhee said.

"You should study the situation there. The success achieved by Carmona the dictator with the help of that financial genius Salazar proves that worldwide depression can be weathered. Not indefinitely, however. The world must discover a way to find consumers for the present overwhelming increase of production or perish economically. But I'm getting away from the question you asked me, and yet not really because it was the example of Portugal and Ireland, of Norway and of Finland which made me ask myself whether Scotland might not find a new life in a friendly separation from England. Incidentally, the same notion is beginning to ferment even in Wales. When one looks at the horizon now and sees those great clouds of enormous mass movements gathering over the heart of Europe it becomes imperative to consider whether a small country can escape being overwhelmed by the storm unless it stands upon its own keel."

"But you said just now, Mr Ogilvie, that no small nation could escape the effects of a general war any longer."

"I wasn't thinking so much of war between nations, Alasdair, as war between classes, when I talked about being overwhelmed. I've already told you that I thought the word liberty was the most abused word in the language, and those who maintain that the communist and Fascist threat to liberty is non-existent because liberty is illusory have a good deal to support their contention. Ludicrously enough our intellectuals of the Left have managed to close their eyes to the communist threat to liberty, but shiver at the prospect of Fascism. But that's by the way. I myself believe that most of our liberty is illusory just as I believe that the original conception of democracy faded when those first Fascists, the Thirty Tyrants, made themselves masters of Athens in the fourth century B.C., and it's just as well to remember that the chief tutor of the Thirty Tyrants was Socrates. In fact the putting to death of

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Socrates was almost the last defensive action that old democracy fought. It was the Christian revelation which offered the true ideal of a new democracy.

"Now although I believe that at present most of our liberty is illusory, I believe equally that human nature can no more afford deliberately to abandon a claim to it than Christianity could afford to abandon the dogma of free will. The individual is threatened with obliteration by this stampede of the herd mind under the leadership of these miscalled dictators, who have nothing in common with the Roman conception of dictatorship. They are for the most part the embodiment of a revolutionary impulse in the wills of the people who follow them. They are thrown up from within, not imposed from without. The parallel for the present state of western humanity is to be sought in the state of mind that caused the Reformation. Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler—we've had no men of comparably disturbing emotional force and influence in Europe since the Reformers, speaking as they do for tormented and despairing millions. Perhaps I'm wrong to include Mussolini with the others. Perhaps he should be classed with the dictators of more conventional pattern like Carmona and Pilsudski or that Greek comedian Pangalos. I don't know. At first I thought him a truly great man. Then I began to suspect a fundamental weakness that amounted to moral cowardice. And who are the men of state we produce to confront the European scene, so perplexing and to men of imagination so terrifying in its potentiality for profound change? Bonar Law! Baldwin! And now Ramsay MacDonald!"

"*A thighearna*, it's pretty terrible," Alasdair MacPhee groaned to himself.

"Oh well, the English and the Scots chose them, and such a choice declares a condition of mental laziness which I maintain is a sign of decadence. But once more I've wandered from my tale. I was speaking about what seemed the abrogation by England of her imperial mission. I suppose I ought to say by Britain; but although Scotsmen may fairly claim to predominate in at least two of the great Dominions, the direction of the Empire is essentially English, and one can take it for granted that the collapse of England would involve the break up of the British Empire. Before the war I was anti-imperialist, but during the war I began to get a vision of what

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the British Empire might make of the world, chiefly I think due to the exultation with which the Australians and New Zealanders at Gallipoli filled me. And I believe that if the British Government would take advantage of these astonishing journeys of the Prince of Wales—he's off to South Africa now—to establish an Imperial Parliament which would move from Westminster to Ottawa, from Ottawa to Canberra, and so on, not forgetting Dublin in a united Ireland from which that morbid growth the Northern Ireland Government had been cut out, nor Edinburgh, nor Delhi, I could preserve an imperial enthusiasm. But that would mean that England, or rather the City of London, would have to keep its fingers out of Europe. If the City of London maintains its grip on Europe, then sooner or later within another thirty years the greater part of Europe will try to shake off that grip, and there is not the slightest sign of awareness in this island what such a struggle might mean.

"Obviously this strange creature Hitler within a very few years must win power for his party, and when he does that must mean the consolidation of Germany. I know that many in the City of London are now prepared to finance him. They've been pouring money into Germany for the last two years, and yet Germany must be financially on the point of collapse at this moment. Presumably, then, the object of this financial aid is to bring Hitler into power and divert the energies of a reinvigorated Germany against Russia. Hitler himself has written a book in which he suggests that this is his object. Well, I don't know. Perhaps the best material solution would be an alliance between Britain and Germany, giving Germany a free hand in Europe and leaving us to concentrate on the Empire. But I don't believe such an alliance is possible until Germany is as strong as ourselves, and if we ever let her become as strong as ourselves we shall probably have to go to war again from an instinct of self-preservation. I don't see how such a war could end in anything except mutual destruction, and I don't see why Scotland and Ireland should be involved in the ruin.

"However, no war is required to involve Scotland in ruin if she is to be dragged at the heels of the City of London along the present road that finance and industry are taking. Long before that fatal year of 1961 for which we have fixed the time for another general war to break out Scotland will have succumbed. And there are

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plenty of black moments when I tell myself that it is already too late. Hence that Utopia of which I sketched a few outlines just now. It won't be enough to rouse the country to the danger by lamenting that life is ebbing from it. We must provide a revolutionary plan. We must learn a lesson from what has happened in Ireland and take advantage of the fight Ireland has made. We must pack into the next few years of Scottish history the last century and a half of Irish history. But you understand that."

"I do understand. And it's because I understand that I secured for myself the pleasure of sitting up with you this night," Alisdair MacPhee declared.

"It was in the summer of 1920 that I met Maclean Sanders."

"Och, him," the young man interrupted scornfully.

"You mustn't be too intolerant of men like Maclean Sanders. They've played a part in helping to keep the national self-consciousness alive. I know they're apt to be sentimentalists and turn their eyes away from the logical conclusion of their arguments, which for you and me is action."

"Ay, action! Action! That's what is wanted now. Less talk and more action."

"All right, we'll come to that presently. It is true that when some years ago I attended a meeting of Maclean Sanders' Scottish Life Society in his flat at the top of an Edinburgh house I was as much oppressed by the same atmosphere of ineffective sentimentality as when as a boy I used to attend gatherings of Jacobite societies. Yet I was soon asking myself what right I who had smothered my dreams twenty-five years ago had to criticize that small gathering of Scottish men and women who at any rate had kept them alive and were giving them the freedom of that George Street flat and allowing dream to mingle with dream. The effect on me was to reveal that my own dreams which I had thought dead were not dead at all, so that at forty, the supposedly fatal threshold of middle-age, instead of bemoaning the lost illusions of youth I was being firmly convinced that they were not illusions at all. No, no, you mustn't scoff at Maclean Sanders, though I recognize just as well as you the danger of allowing action to evaporate in sentimentality. But isn't that a threat in everything to our country, the way we put our deeds at the service of others and nourish ourselves on words? Think of the accumulated verbiage heaped upon the immortal memory of

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Burns every twenty-fifth of January and the profound oblivion for the rest of the year in which what he tried to teach his countrymen remains."

"We don't read much of Burns in the Highlands."

"I know. It's a pity, because he has as much to teach the North and the West as the South and the East. He gives back to all of us our youth. But I was forgetting. You still have yours."

"I hope I'll keep it as long as you," the young man murmured.

"Well, I must admit that it is a great satisfaction on the edge of fifty to feel worthy of being considered idiotic by most of one's contemporaries. But I was telling you about the meeting of the Scottish Life Society and my realization that in spite of its apparent ineffectiveness such a society meeting in Edinburgh was a sign of the way the wind was blowing. I told you about my friend Fitzgerald who was killed by Free State troops. Years ago he had foreseen his death and, except for the date, the very inscription that was one day to be painted on the white cross above his grave by the side of a bohoreen between Dingle and Tralee: 'Pray for the soul of Edward Fitzgerald, I.R.A., who died in defence of Ireland, August 14th, 1922. R.I.P.' Do you know what R.I.P. stands for?"

"Isn't it Rest in Peace?"

"Yes, or better *Requiescat in Pace*. May he rest in peace. Now, of course, Fitzgerald was a Catholic, and for a long time I had accepted the fact that if Christianity was true the Catholic Faith was the only repository of that truth. The trouble was I could not gain that absolute assurance of the soul's immortality which would drive me into the Church. This death of my friend foreseen by himself did not seem to me to admit any possible materialistic explanation. It is fashionable since Einstein to juggle with time, but I can see no application of relativity which will provide for a boy of seventeen foreseeing the inscription above his own grave twenty-two years later."

"It was the *taibhsearachd*, the second sight, right enough," said MacPhee. "My great-uncle Murchadh had it. He would vomit for a night and a day after he was meeting the funeral of one who had not yet died. And in his boat he has seen a plank lift itself up when one of his crew was coming aboard and that same would be a plank in the man's coffin. None of the others would be seeing

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the plank lift itself. He told my grandfather it was a terrible thing to see the way it would lift itself slowly up and welcome a man before death was on him. Ay, ay, your friend had the *taibhsearachd* right enough."

"I daresay it will seem to you a poor reason for becoming a Catholic," John went on. "But you must remember I lacked only that assurance of the soul's immortality. I had had my daughter baptized into the Church when she was born. Forgive what must seem anyway a digression, but the point of it is that with a certain knowledge at last of man's spiritual destiny I felt more certain of a nation's spiritual destiny. It seemed to me no longer a matter of sentimental regret about a past that is irrevocably lost, but a matter of urgent importance for the future that Scotland should not lose her soul."

"It would take another John Knox as white as that one was black to take Scotland back to Rome."

"Why do you call John Knox black, you a Presbyterian?"

"Because it was John Knox who betrayed his country to England. Och, I daresay he was convinced it was all for the best; but he's the man that led us to where we stand to-day. Mind you, I'm not talking from a religious point of view. I'm not much taken up with religion at all, and I'm very sure John Knox's religion wasn't worth destroying a country's true independence to secure it."

"Well, I shall leave John Knox to your condemnation. I'm not concerned now with religious difficulties, and you misunderstood me when you supposed I thought of converting Scotland to the Catholic Faith. I wasn't talking of the loss of the country's soul in terms of its religion. I was thinking of the way man seems turning now toward the example of the ant and the bee and the termite. If this life is all, it doesn't seem to me to matter which road man takes in his evolution; but if he has an immortal future beyond this life, it seems to me worth while to fight against this present trend. What does material progress matter if spiritual progress is a reality? To what purpose would those men have given their lives for Ireland in 1916 if the soul of Ireland was an illusion? I may think that Dundee's death was a far greater loss to Scotland than the sum-total of the Covenanters who died; but in eternity the soul of Dundee and the souls of the Covenanters have fought for

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the same cause—the freedom of their country's soul—and they rest together in peace.”

“I would not say the black soul of John Knox rests with them,” said Alasdair MacPhee sombrely. “Man, I wish it was just as true as the pictures in an old Bible would have you believe. I’d die right now just for the pleasure of finding that John Knox was not quite so important an old *bodach* as he believed himself.”

“To do him justice, Alasdair, at moments he himself had grave doubts about his own salvation.”

“And not without plenty reason.”

A silence succeeded. Above the stillness of the frost John could fancy that the breath of the sleepers in this small inn was audible. It seemed to float down from the cracks in the greyish ceiling, to exhale itself through the pictures upon the blue-green walls, to contend with the whispers in the heart of the fire and the fluttering of the minute blue flames that played like butterflies around the coal.

“How soundly they sleep!” John exclaimed.

“The people of Scotland?”

“Or the people in this inn. And what gives such a feeling of unreality as sitting like this with such sleepers all about one? One seems at this moment as insecure on earth as a figure in somebody else’s dream.

“This meeting with you, Mr Ogilvie, is real enough for me. Gosh, I’ll never be done thinking about it.”

“Why, I could fancy, Alasdair, that this meeting may be significant, but then think how portentous to ourselves appear the most trivial incidents of our dreams. In talking to you I have been supposing that you embody the spirit of youth in Scotland, and so I have been talking not to Alasdair MacPhee, traveller for the firm of Loudoun and Gray, biscuit-makers of Glasgow, but to . . . ah, well, what does it matter? Put another lump of coal on. The frost is gaining.”

John’s companion built up the fire, and the crackling of it waked the smoking-room from the nocturnal spell and restored it to quotidianity.

“I was afraid you were wanting to go to sleep,” said Alasdair.

“You want me to go rambling on?” John asked, filling his pipe.

The young man nodded.

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"Where had I got to before John Knox intervened? Oh, yes, I was talking about the effect of my submission to the Catholic Church. I don't have to tell you that there's more ignorance and misunderstanding of Catholicism in Scotland than anywhere. The misunderstanding is fostered too often by the ministers from an instinct of self-preservation. I might add that this applies particularly to the younger ministers who are probably aware of their own decline from the standard of theology and scholarship demanded once upon a time. The steadily increasing deterioration, especially in the great majority of the candidates from the Highlands and Islands, must be causing concern among their seniors. Oh, yes, there are plenty of exceptions, but the level of intelligence and culture as a whole is painfully low and it is not compensated for by any marked spiritual fervour. The greatest fear I have for the success of any effort to revitalize the Highlands is the evidence of decay offered by those younger ministers."

"Och, they don't count one way or the other," Alasdair affirmed.

"That's what worries me. If I looked at the matter from a sectarian point of view I might perceive in this feebleness only a sign of the crumbling of Protestantism all over the globe, and welcome it accordingly. But I should much prefer to see Scottish Presbyterianism as vigorous as once upon a time, recognizing in it an expression of the vigour of the nation itself. This slow dreary decline is alarming, and I cannot help feeling a profound contempt for those who try to discredit the National Movement by whispering that it is a Romanizing movement because they are afraid that any vital political movement will put a strain upon their own inadequacy, and perhaps endanger the material benefits that accrue from the soft job into which they have so effortlessly slid."

"I don't see why you're worrying at all, Mr Ogilvie. Speaking for the average young Scotsman, Highland or Lowland, I'd say religion was mostly a matter of conventionality. And anyway we don't see at all what religion has to do with politics."

"Not sectarian disputes, perhaps, but you'll have to agree that the strength of the Irish reassertion of nationhood was the simultaneous affirmation of faith in the Divine revelation of a way of life. And that's what I want to press home to you. I could not have grown so deeply concerned about the future of one small country on the fringe of the immense Eurasian continent without

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a religion to the normal standards of which I could always subordinate politics. That does not mean I want to link a revival of Scottish political life with a revival of Scottish Catholicism. What I do fervidly believe is the vanity of merely humanitarian politics, and I think I am justified in feeling a little dismayed by the readiness with which professing Christian believers in Scotland will condemn the National Movement for its imaginary Catholic affiliations and make that a reason for working against it, preferring to give their approval to Laodiceans in religion and politics. On the other side are the Scotsmen who fear that the National Movement is tainted with communism."

"I've thought a good deal about communism myself," said Alasdair MacPhee.

"Of course you have. All of us who have contemplated the economic mess into which man has got himself must have wondered whether any palliatives are worth discussion compared with what appears the ruthless logic of the communist knife. Unfortunately communism suffers from one grave flaw. It demands a bureaucracy to work it; it is therefore fundamentally wasteful. The bees had a similar problem when they perfected their detestable hive system, and a most unattractive solution they evolved with their drones. Moreover, we could not massacre our bureaucrats in the way bees massacre their drones every year. A nuptial flight by some myriad-breasted female Lenin or Stalin of the future and the consequent massacre of every commissar that failed to reach the potentially fecund monster beguiles the fancy, but . . . ah well, if Scotland decide for herself to make the communist experiment I shall not fight against it when the time comes. Meanwhile, it confuses the issue, which surely is clear enough. Has this country enough confidence in its future to take the risk of self-determination? The double-barrelled word stinks a bit of the war's gunpowder; but it is expressive and should not be discarded until a better is coined. I've chattered away to you about my Utopia to-night, but if I made of Scottish self-determination nothing except a railway to that Utopia it would run off the lines very soon and come to grief. What finally we demand of the people is an act of faith in their vitality. If they cannot make such an act they will die. Nations have died before. A hundred years hence tourists may turn aside from the corniche road round Scotland to see the Highland reservation, to

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populate which a few of the hookworm-ridden poor whites of Barbadoes will be brought back from the island where Cromwell sent them after Worcester, Macleods sold into slavery, branded and mutilated, whose descendants are still called 'redlegs' from their kilted ancestors."

"Och, yes, faith in its future is what the country needs right enough," Alasdair agreed. "But what's to give the country that faith?"

"On an autumn evening of 1928," John went on, "I believed that question had been answered. It was the evening of the great meeting in St Andrew's Hall after Cunninghame Graham had run Baldwin to within sixty-six votes for the Rectorship of Glasgow University. Late the night before the election I had seen the students on the Nationalist Committee lying back exhausted by the ardours of the campaign. They had put up a tremendous fight, but nobody dreamed of making more than a good show against the Liberal and the Labour candidates. The Prime Minister himself was considered unassailable. As long as Cunninghame Graham was not bottom of the poll we felt that one stone would have been well and truly laid of the foundations on which the new Scotland was to rise. But the students had emptied themselves out, and into the vacuum a despondency had crept so that now they could not imagine their candidate's name anywhere except at the bottom of the poll. I thought such despondency was a hopeful sign. It meant that they had done their utmost, and I seemed to recognize the exhaustion of genuine creative effort. The next day I was in Edinburgh with Cunninghame Graham who was staying at the Caledonian Hotel. Did you ever see Cunninghame Graham?"

"No, I never saw the man himself. I've seen pictures of him in the papers.

"Photographs in the papers don't give you the grace of the man. Nor the strength of him. He is like a Toledo blade. I remember years and years ago I saw and coveted a dagger of Toledo steel, and while I was wondering whether I could afford to buy it the vendor took from his pocket a 10-centavo piece—the equivalent of a penny—and set it on the counter in front of him. 'Try it upon that,' he told me, and when I hesitated he urged me not to be afraid of turning the point. So, lifting the dagger, I brought it down upon the copper coin and pinned it to the counter. 'And again, again,'

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he insisted. And when I had perforated that 10-centavo piece a dozen times I bought the dagger. Cunninghame Graham can pierce as easily those of his countrymen who believe that the Scotsman's securest shield is a bawbee. We sat together in the lounge of the Caledonian waiting for the telegram from Glasgow to announce the result of the Rectorial poll. He sat with his back to the windows and I opposite could look at a great blue and white October sky over Edinburgh and see behind him the springing of the Castle rock. He alone seemed worthy of that hard and lovely city among those twittering strangers and natives who sat in that hotel-lounge, which like all railway-hotel lounges seems to have been designed and decorated by a Pullman-car mind. Yet such was his personality that like the portrait of a great painter he reduced his surroundings to a mildly decorative unimportance. The hair blown back like the crest of a wave but not so white, the long pointed beard, the horseman's hands a violinist would envy, the Quixotic eyes veiled for protection with a courteous contempt lest any should suppose that his personal emotions were affected by the forlorn hopes his eloquence championed, that best of Scottish eloquence warmed and ripened and even parched by the Latin sun but not sprouting green and soggy as kail under the moist influence of the English moon . . . and then Maclean Sanders suddenly appeared in the entrance to the lounge, kilted. 'Dear me,' said Cunninghame Graham, 'isn't that Maclean Sanders? Poor fellow, he's rather a bore. I do not want to hear about the Picts just at present.' "

"There you are now!" exclaimed John's listener. "I told you, Mr Ogilvie, I didn't think much of Maclean Sanders at all."

"Ah yes, Alasdair, but Cunninghame Graham at the age of seventy-six was entitled to find him a bore. I confess I *was* surprised to see Maclean Sanders kilted in the middle of the Caledonian lounge. He always used to be more solicitous in Edinburgh to Sanders than to Maclean, and outside the remote Highlands he never donned the kilt except in his own house after dusk.

"Was he looking for the fairies in the Caledonian Hotel?" Alasdair asked scornfully.

"Perhaps the fairies brought him there that day," John replied. "And one of them disguised as a page-boy came into the lounge at that moment with a telegram for Cunninghame Graham. Don Roberto—we call him Don Roberto, you know—read it. Then

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he passed it to me, and I read that the President of the National Party of Scotland which was hardly six months old had failed by only sixty-six votes to keep the Prime Minister out of the Rectorship. The Liberal and the Labour candidates were nowhere. 'A most satisfactory result,' Don Roberto observed, playing with the telegram like a lace-handkerchief as he spoke. In the circumstances it is as good as a victory, and I shall be spared the boredom of composing a Rectorial Address. Ah, Sanders, I've just had the result of the election in Glasgow. Sixty-six votes behind Baldwin who was first, which of course was to be expected." Maclean Sanders stared at him. Then he did something which waking from his wildest dreams of Bruce and Wallace he can never have contemplated the possibility of doing. That dark, hatchet-faced, fundamentally dour Edinburgh citizen whom some present ment had inspired to don the kilt on this day of days flung his bonnet in the air and let out a hoot of exultation. The eyes of the twittering tea-sippers in the Cally lounge followed that bonnet ceilingwards where it spun for a moment against the Pullman-car decorations before, still followed by the eyes of the tea-sippers, it returned to earth, fortunately on a vacant space of carpet. It would have been sad if that reward of a lifetime's missionary endeavour had been marred by having to apologize to an uncomprehending citizeness of Edinburgh for upsetting her teacup into her lap. 'Well,' Maclean Sanders declared, 'I'm glad that we did our bit by agreeing to let the Scottish Life Society be absorbed in the National Party of Scotland. Cunninghame Graham, a dram? Ogilvie, a dram?' Don Roberto declined with a courtly gesture; but he might as well have accepted Maclean Sanders' offer of whisky because as usual it was not an hour at which alcoholic drinks may be served to non-residents. 'They won't even let us have our *uisge beatha*,' Sanders said to me."

"Ay, he would say that," Alasdair murmured. "It's one of the words these Gaelic enthusiasts never fail to learn."

"I think it was the next day after that the first great demonstration of the National Party of Scotland was held in St Andrew's Hall, Glasgow. All sorts of people one had never suspected of being Nationalists sat on the platform to support the speakers, and when the Duke of Montrose put his hand on the red and gold flag draped in front of him and called upon the people to witness

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that the lion rampant was alive again, you might have believed from the answering shout from the people in that great hall that those Glasgow students whom I had last seen white and exhausted by their own creative energy on the eve of the election had given back to their country faith in her destiny. I remember in my own emotion turning away from the audience and seeing one of Glasgow's oldest journalists sitting there on the platform with the tears streaming down his cheeks. And when the meeting was over Don Roberto and I went off to supper at one of the railway hotels. A hideous room with crimson flock wallpaper, the tables already laid for breakfast, ourselves the only guests, and a solitary waiter who yawned wearily as he produced the menu. And while we sat there waiting for the mixed grill on which I had insisted Don Roberto looked round him as if there were ghosts at every table. 'I had supper here with Parnell after the great meeting in . . .' whatever year it was. 'And in that corner over there Keir Hardie and I had supper after one of our meetings . . . we used to think an errand-boy, a nurse-maid and a lamp-post a good audience in those days. Keir Hardie never had such a meeting in those days in the 'eighties as we had to-night. I think we ought to make good progress now.' 'We have no time to lose,' I said. And as I spoke it seemed that from the shadows I could see the ghosts of Don Roberto's political past nodding their approbation. And I thought of those people streaming out of St Andrew's Hall into the murk of that autumn night, and illuminating it with the glow kindled in their own hearts.

"It's strange that glow in the North. On railway journeys when I've looked out of the carriage window and seen the furnaces of the Black Country I've often thought how symbolic they were of the people. Oh, that spiritual coldness of the South, apart from Cornwall and South Wales! The expatriate Scot, or for that matter the expatriate Yorkshireman, shrivels in it, feels himself shrivelling, and takes refuge in aggressiveness, canniness, and sentimentality. You asked me, Alasdair, a while ago why I am a Scottish Nationalist, and I think the true answer is that glow. It's embarrassing to try to put into words so intimate an emotion, even in the intimate small hours of a winter's night when two bedless travellers are sitting up and exchanging confidences through the tobacco-smoke of an inn parlour at the country's end. I've outlived the days when I might have aimed to express that emotion in

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lyric verse. By the way, you must show me some of your own poetry."

"Och, you're not going to change the subject so easily, Mr Ogilvie. There are hours enough ahead for me to worry you with my verses, but I'll likely never have you to myself the way I have you now, and your dreams at your elbow."

"I love Scotland, Alasdair, and whenever and wherever I feel that glow it sets my heart beating as women in their day have set it beating. But long before a woman set it beating I had been stirred so profoundly by the abrupt revelation of life itself that the love I have for Scotland seems to me now the final and perfect expression of my own vitality within the bounds of mortal flesh. Long ago in boyhood I experienced the mental phenomenon which is called conversion."

"Conversion?" the younger man repeated in quick suspicion. "I've seen a lot of conversions—girls carried out of church screaming they could see the Devil waiting for them on the edge of Hell. We used to watch to see how high they'd kick their legs. Not but what some of the chaps weren't as bad. Sitting back rolling the whites of their eyes and groaning about having found Jesus. And after one of those grand religious revivals there used to be more lassies in the family way than usual."

"Well, my conversion was not a feature of communal hysteria," John went on. "Indeed, it was not at all specifically religious. I came nearer to that with another strange mental experience in Cracow when I was eighteen. Many people have tried to describe and convey to others that strange early experience, but unless one has had a comparable experience oneself I do not fancy it is possible to receive the effect of it from another by the exercise of imaginative understanding. Finally, it remains as incommunicable as the terror of a nightmare or a paroxysm of physical pain."

"The experience came to me when I was spending a fortnight of my summer holidays with an uncle and aunt at Swanage in Dorset. The downland ran to the cliff's edge and in those days—the year before the Diamond Jubilee it was—the prospect seemed immeasurably vast in its emptiness. Those wide empty spaces beside the sea are not so easy to find along the south coast of England nowadays. You know the delight in solitude that so often bewitches a boy during those months while he is passing from boyhood

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to adolescence? Only the company of his dearest friend would be tolerable, but the dearest friend is usually spending his summer holidays at the other end of the country. I was in such a mood that August morning long ago, desiring freedom from human voices and the tyranny of time. I sound a theme for a Wordsworthian reverie so far, but I must add that I was carrying an air-gun and that the winking sea below, the blue sky above, the range of snowy cumulus along the northern horizon, and the expanse of ripe grass over which I stepped did not evoke noble aspirations to put myself in tune with the infinite but were completely subordinate to the prime occupation of my mind, which was to shoot a stonechat with my air-gun. The beastly little weapon was called the Daisy or the Gem or some such preposterously unsuitable name. It cost seven-and-six and fired hollow slugs which would kill a blackbird at thirty feet. Well, in due course I reached the stretch of whins among which I planned to crouch in ambush until a stonechat—*clacharan* it is in Gaelic, isn't it?—should settle within range long enough for me to kill it. In due course a stonechat lighted on a whin spray hardly ten yards from the bush behind which I was sheltering. I raised my gun and aimed as steadily as my excitement would allow. And then the bird's innocence of danger suddenly struck me with a pang. I see now the black cap and white rump bobbing and the ruddy breast ruffled by the light summer breeze, and the click-clack that voiced the joy of being alive is still in my ears. I lowered my weapon with an immeasurable relief that I had apprehended in time the enormity of the sin I had planned to commit—well, I hope you'll not think I'm exaggerating, if I call it a sin against the Holy Ghost. You would not if I could communicate to you the sense of enrichment that overwhelmed me in the moment of this apprehension. I pushed the beastly little weapon into the heart of the densest whinbush I could find so that its spring might rust away in ignominy. I knew that never so long as I should live would I take life wantonly and wastefully, and I never have.

“But the change wrought in me is not to be expressed by that resolution. I saw the world with new eyes. You can read of that in the descriptions with which others have tried to communicate the astonishing enhancement of the visible scene that follows such an experience, of how any sense is heightened so that . . . but it's idle to continue. It is a transcendent experience beyond the

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power of words. I suppose that the favoured apostles beheld the process shown forth in Christ Himself during the Transfiguration. The narrative of that must be meaningless to all who have not experienced such a transfiguration of the material world. I think that when this experience is granted it is granted to most people with the opportunity to give it an immediately practical and religious application, and therefore those who have built directly upon such an experience a structure from which the spirit of man has been inspired to reveal to other men the spirit of God have usually been granted this experience in full maturity. I did not suppose at the time that my experience was a religious experience. Indeed, I think I can say that I reached faith by a process of exhausting the effects of non-faith. To be sure, I received an assurance of immortality from the case of my Irish friend Fitzgerald, but I realize now that faith was in fact granted to me as long ago as that August in 1896, for thereafter it was for ever impossible for me to accept even for an instant any hypothesis that the universe was an accident. I was always guarded against intellectual despair by the memory of that vision of life beheld when for an instant the veil had been lifted."

"I've never known anything like that," Alasdair murmured. "It has stayed with you the way I've heard old men tell who thought they had seen the *sluagh*, the fairy host. My grandfather, the bard, told me that he saw them once very early on a May morning when old Duncan the Post was ill and he was carrying the letters for him. He was twenty-three years old at the time. I asked him mightn't it be the way the sun was streaming level with him so early in the morning, but he wouldn't have that at all. He said he'd seen the sun many a time early on a May morning but never before or since a wind of golden creatures sweep through the air and no wind blowing and the sea as quiet as the dew. And he said more than that, Mr Ogilvie. He said the sight filled him with a great longing to kneel down and praise God. That was the way the vision seized him, that and a great feeling of pity for the poor souls who took the world round them for granted. He told the minister what he had seen, and the minister rebuked him for superstition and then my grandfather rebuked the minister for his lack of faith. I know it ended in my grandfather's leaving the Church of Scotland and joining the United Free Church. Och, the history

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of the two Churches is mostly a matter of personal disagreements and family prejudices. But my grandfather himself was never bitter. Something happened to him right enough on that morning, but what it was I'm sure I could not say, for nothing ever happened to me in that kind of way. Nor ever will," the young man added with a sigh.

"Whatever your grandfather saw, it was something which transcended normal experience, and the emotion which filled him with a longing to praise God was probably the same kind of emotion as I had. But, as I told you, I was not of an age to associate it with any kind of response to the claims of religion. I know now that I was filled with the love of God. Jesus told the lawyer who asked Him what he should do to inherit eternal life that the first and great commandment of the law was that a man should love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength, and with all his mind, and that the second commandment like unto it was that he should love his neighbour as himself. The lawyer went on, if you remember, in the pawky way lawyers have, to ask who was his neighbour, and that was the occasion of the parable of the Good Samaritan, or at least that was the occasion in the Gospel of St Luke; but in the Gospel of St Matthew after the lawyer had been answered he remained silent and Jesus asked the assembled Pharisees a question. He asked them whose son was the Christ and when they said the son of David He set them a poser from the psalms of David which they were unable to answer. He did in fact challenge them with His Divinity, and the Evangelist notes that from that day forth no man dare ask Him any more questions. Now I have always thought that St Luke's introduction of the Good Samaritan parable at this point and his omission of that final poser have tended to narrow the interpretation of Christ's words. The original commandment came from Moses, who presented the love of God to the Children of Israel in the form of a grateful duty for which God would reward His chosen people. Christ added the second great commandment like unto it about loving one's neighbour as oneself. Such a commandment crashed right through Jewish complacency and in case there was any doubt left in the mind of His audience He followed up with the parable of the Good Samaritan, which by shaming Jewish exclusiveness took away the duty of loving God as a prerogative of the Children of Israel and

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extended it to all mankind. This revolutionary teaching He as it were sealed with the implication of His own Divinity which followed and no doubt thereby provided a decisive reason for the orthodox Jews to have Him eliminated. If Christ intended the commandment of Moses to love God to be extended to myriads outside the compound of what the Jews believed to be at once the Supreme and only God and their own tribal deity the chief deity of Whose omnipotence was the protection of His Chosen People when they displayed their love of Him by behaving themselves, if, I say, Christ intended this widening of the commandment's application, He must have intended at the same time to widen its meaning. To me it has long seemed a command to love with zest God's purpose and rejoice in the richness of opportunity that mortal life offers. It is a command to fulfil the vitality of the incarnate human soul. I think we cramp the expression of this love whether for God or for that neighbour to be loved as oneself if we restrict the expression of it to what we call the exercise of charity. We have seen the disastrous result of translating St Paul's 'love' as 'charity', when the qualities the apostle attributes to love were for nearly four centuries in this country attributed to that form of it expressed by charity, and with an ever increasing emphasis on the expression of benevolence by the bestowal of one's wealth, whether that wealth was a penny or a million pounds, upon charities or individuals in need of compassion's help. Indeed, so-called charity is still what the great majority of people believe to be a greater virtue than faith and hope. Now surely what St Paul meant was that love was greater because it included faith and hope. In fact he says so when he says that love believeth all things and hopeth all things. Love in fact is so much the *summum bonum* of human nature that sometimes it seems to me essential for the future of humanity not to allow the word to be debased by turning it into a mixture of concupiscence and compassion. And such a mixture is certainly inadequate to express the human heart's acknowledgment of God. Your grandfather understood what it was to love God when he knelt to praise Him after the golden mystery he had beheld that morning. I think that I as a boy loved God when I lowered my idiotic little air-gun in awe of life, and I know that for a while after that Divine infusion of love I was in serene accord with life. People, trees, birds, books . . . all were enhanced by that new transcendent vision of life granted

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to me in that instant of time. But this continual harping upon what I know is incommunicable must be growing tiresome."

"No, no, I'm appreciating very much the trouble you're taking to try to explain it to me, Mr Ogilvie. I may not be able to understand so as to put it into words myself what you tell me, but will I be guessing wrong if I guess that you have seen Scotland with the love you learnt that day?"

"You would be guessing right. It is not usual for me to strip like this before anybody, least of all before a young man not half my age. I have never talked like this to my most intimate friends. Well, *hoc erat in votis*," John murmured to himself, for this young man with the slanting, sombre, burning eyes was seeing the answer to his prayers and to be revealing in his dark face and slim shape the secret spirit of the nation's youth. And this secret spirit responded to his own. This might be a deeper, more portentous communing than this small inn parlour had ever known, from which would spring the creative act to animate the National Movement with life.

"You're not regretting your confidence, Mr Ogilvie?" the secret spirit asked, for in those few moments of silent meditation Alasdair MacPhee had ceased to be a particular young Highlander wondering whither Loudoun and Gray's biscuits would lead him and had lost the embarrassing lineaments of an individual.

"No more than if I had given it to a fir-tree in the remotest depths of Glen Affric," John declared, "and I heard the sough of the wind through its dark branches in response and commentary. Well, Alasdair, I don't suppose I need tell you that the effect of my experience gradually diminished and that within a year I was looking back to it as a vivid dream dreamt in childhood. The world, the flesh, and the Devil form a powerful triple alliance. Nevertheless, I was granted one inestimable quality, and that was never to change fundamentally my point of view about life. In the jargon of the moment the values I acquired in my 'teens are the values I cherish now, and so far from being tarnished by age and experience they have been made brighter by both. In my boyhood I dreamed of an independent Scotland, but it was in terms of the past. The loss of that independence was a tragedy which had been played and on which the curtain had fallen for ever. I was dreaming at the same time of an independent Poland, but again as a tragedy which

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had been played and on which the curtain had fallen for ever. And so with Ireland, and so with that part of Greece which was still subject to the Turks. The Greco-Turkish war was a bitter blow to my hopes, and a year later the defeat of Spain by the Americans was another. My hatred of imperialism was confirmed by the Boer War, although in the boredom of respectable existence during the last decade of the nineteenth century I did consider enlisting in the Imperial Yeomanry. Now, much of that boredom was produced by the depressing effect of modern development upon the life of the individual. Did you ever read a book by G. K. Chesterton called *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*?"

"I never did, no."

"It is a most significant expression, in the form of a fantasy, of the individual's revolt against size and numbers and sameness. It is the dream of any imaginative boy educated at a big London school during that last decade of the nineteenth century which its unimaginative successors have been as little able to understand as ten years hence most people will fail to understand the third decade of the twentieth century which expired last month. You are suffering now from a similar depression, Alasdair. You are faced with the alternative of what seems to you a dull obscurity in a country which can offer no inducement to its young men to serve it or an equally dull but materially much more profitable obscurity in the service of what is called the British Empire. I don't mean official employment so much as extended commercial opportunities. Trade follows the flag? It is the other way round. The flag usually follows trade, or at any rate the prospect of it. You don't want to become just one more expatriate Scot consoling yourself for devoting your talents, your energy, and your enthusiasm to alien ambition with the reflection that poor old England could not get on without you. You do not derive any particular satisfaction from the thought that your country is a junior partner in a worldwide concern. You prefer in fact an old-fashioned shop of your own in a small town to being a manager of one branch of a chain-store. Polish young men were feeling the same until by a miracle of circumstance Poland won back her independence and integrity after a century and a quarter. Ireland has not yet achieved all she aspires to achieve, but thanks to the absurd incompetence of English, Scottish, and Welsh politicians she has achieved ten times as much

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as my friend Fitzgerald in his wildest dreams hoped would be achieved when I listened to him thirty years ago. There is much to be said against great wars, but after the first exhaustion has passed they do make people receptive of new ideas, though I wish that the sovereign independence of Scotland did not have to be called a new idea, for with the memories of our past that is humiliating. Yes, thanks to a great war you and I can be sitting together at two o'clock of a January morning and discussing the future of our country with an optimism over the possibility of change that would have been unimaginable before 1914."

"Are you so optimistic over the possibility of change, Mr Ogilvie? It doesn't seem to me we're moving forward at all now," the younger man muttered gloomily. "The time has come to stop talking. Ireland did not win by talking."

"We have not been talking so very long yet. Ireland talked for a hundred and eighteen years between 1798 and 1916. Poland attempted to interrupt talk with action at least twice with disastrous effect. Brittany has been talking for over a century without any action. Wales is only beginning to talk now after long enough. It's no use pretending that I would not rather Scotland should achieve without violence what Ireland has achieved. I learnt to be suspicious of the value of action to the individual during the war. The trouble is reaction. I think that's evident in Ireland to-day. If the country had not been so utterly exhausted by violent action there would have been less conventionality about the use she has made of her freedom. I hope that the passion of a Scotland which has asserted her sovereign independence will not have been spent by violence but spend itself in the creation of a country able to set an example to the rest of the world of what a nation set free from imperialism can effect. At present Norway and Sweden and Denmark are the envy of us. I want us to be the envy of them. It was not with thoughts of violence that in Glasgow on a May afternoon in 1928 I knew again something of that response to life with love I knew first upon that August morning in the year before the Diamond Jubilee."

"In May? I thought the St Andrew's Hall meeting was in the autumn of that year."

"So it was, but this was a more important day for myself. The occasion was merely to give me an opportunity to meet some of the

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prominent members of the new National Party. It had just been formed through the efforts made by the Glasgow University Scottish Nationalist Association to amalgamate the several societies, leagues, and clubs which for some years had been working each on its own lines and with its own policy to stir up the national conscience, or perhaps consciousness would be a better word. Every one of these separate little organizations had sacrificed something to achieve a manifesto of aims to which all could subscribe. The extremists had surrendered some of the objects believed to be in advance of the situation and the moderates had surrendered enough of their caution to console the extremists for what they had surrendered. There was a glow of amity when about a dozen of us, men and women, sat down to tea in a Glasgow restaurant on that May afternoon, a glow I beheld symbolized by the shafts of mellow sunlight streaming in through the westerly windows, in each of which the innumerable motes were swarming rhythmically like myriads of little people who had been stirred from their sleep by this warmth and brightness. Of what we discussed that afternoon I retain not a word. I was merely aware that about a dozen ordinary people were filled with creative life and that I was sharing in that manifestation. The noise of the traffic in the streets, the shouts of the paper-boys, the whistle of trains behind the ugly front of the Central Station, the clatter of plates, and the chatter of people at tea in other parts of the room disturbed that life kindled by love no more than a fugue of Bach disturbs the worshippers in a cathedral. They were indeed an ordinary musical voluntary playing in the background of a profound common emotion. Glasgow is a city I never visit without a more intense awareness of the warmth of human nature than any city gives me, though God knows it is a city over which not even its own Lord Provost can afford to rhapsodize. Still, in spite of its slums and comedians, its bad restaurants and fogs and damp and plaster bread, I love it more than Edinburgh, just as I love Dundee more than Aberdeen."

"I hate the four of them," Alasdair declared. "And Glasgow the worst."

"Ah well, Glasgow gave me something that May afternoon which I can never forget. It gave me an assurance that the dreams and fantasies of youth could be transmuted into the projects, the rational deliberate projects of age and experience. The next morn-

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ing I left Glasgow by that very early train for Mallaig. The wide-eyed sun coming up behind Ben Lomond was sloping steep golden ladders to Loch Long as the train ran northward. Never did Rannoch burn with so bright a solitude, nor ever did Ben Nevis tower above so fair a magic of land and water, and never did the sea-lochs of the west shimmer with so rich a blue beyond the birken green. And on a lonely brae beyond Arisaig I saw from the windows of the compartment a kilted piper in full blast, his hair blown behind him by the May breeze and a boy running beside to keep up with him. It was not a delusion; I leant out of the railway-carriage and watched him, a kilted piper in his shirt, till the line curved and he was out of sight."

"He'd be daft, likely."

"No more daft than I was that morning, and I blessed him for the omen of life he gave to me in that rolling green desert which saw the beginning and the end of the Prince's Year. It was for me hallowed ground, and though above the roar of the train I could not hear with the ears of the flesh the tune he played, I heard it in my heart and it was a hallowed tune."

"It was strange, right enough," Alasdair agreed at last, after a moment's hesitation. He did not like to acquit the piper of daftness too easily.

"And now it's your turn, Alasdair," John said. "You are impatient of the slowness with which we are moving. But we have not really moved so slowly as you think. Last year we doubled the membership of the Party. We have fought two or three bye-elections and on paper the results have certainly not been impressive. Nevertheless, our votes have shown a steady increase, and best sign of all the secret agents of the Conservative and Unionist Central Office have found it worth while to propagate fables in the interest of prejudice. At present the country knows in its heart that something is rotten with the State, but is in the same sort of indecision as Hamlet was about life after death. It prefers for the present at any rate to bear those ills it has than fly to others that it knows not of. Hence the question on so many lips 'What will an independent Scotland do?', and when an act of faith in the will and ability of an independent Scotland to recreate itself is demanded, the currents of perplexity about the future turn awry and lose the name of action."

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"The opiate of Safety First which Baldwin administered to the electorate will be administered again before long, yes, opium from the Flanders poppies smoked in a bulldog briar to drug the country with its fumes. I doubt if this Labour Government will last much longer. The men who led that Sunday-school-treat revolution in 1926 haven't the brains or the guts to last much longer. The enfranchisement of women has been as much responsible as anything for the lethargy of caution which infects us. People were misled by the suffragettes into supposing that the female vote would exert a radical influence upon politics. Women are the enemy of action. Oh yes, when war comes they call on the men to take action in the spirit of the wife who gets her husband out of bed to see if there's a burglar moving about downstairs, but that's only the expression of suddenly alarmed conservatism. And nowhere are women more conservative than in Scotland. It's fantastic to think that it was the vote of the women students in Glasgow University which gave Baldwin his victory over Cunninghame Graham. But so it was. I'll admit that if women can be stirred they are usually more ruthless and more reckless than men. The furies of many a revolution testify to that. At present the solid mass of Scottish womanhood is preoccupied with the minor difficulties and discomforts of domestic existence and is profoundly convinced that political change of any kind only adds to such difficulties and discomforts. Moreover, woman is notoriously sceptical and realist. Her experience of man through the aeons has made her so. If Jock tells Maggie that he's going to work for Scottish independence, Maggie's first reaction is that this is another device of Jock's to waste time and money he should be keeping for herself and his home. And if he goes on to argue that Scottish independence will mean a brighter and better home, she'll set her chin and harden her eyes as obstinately unconvinced as if he were telling her of a horse that was sure to win the next time it ran."

"It would appear that you've been a little disappointed yourself, Mr Ogilvie," the younger man suggested.

"No, not yet. But we haven't a century before us, and the pace of the world is quickening all the time. Unless we can cut free from England's foreign and financial policy within the next few years I think it will be too late. The best thing that could happen to carry things forward would be another great

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war, but I don't think that even the lazy-minded mediocrities into whose keeping our lazy-minded electorate is always willing to hand the future will be unimaginative enough not to avoid that."

"Och, nobody wants another war," said Alasdair.

"If I may say so, that's a lazy-minded phrase," John observed. "Nobody wants another epidemic of the plague, but if our hygiene was on a level with our statesmanship we should soon be having one. But as I said just now, it's your turn. Give me your criticism of the National Party tactics."

"Well, in the first place I think the declared object should be a free and independent Scottish Republic. Look at it this way. I might be willing to give my life for a Republic, but I wouldn't give it for a Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations. I'm not saying it mightn't suit us to keep in with the British Commonwealth, but the way I read our history we were a better people when the English were keeping us out of their Empire and we were in direct touch with Europe."

"I've said already that I believe Scotland requires a King. A Scottish Republic would expire of a plethora of committees. There would be no chance at first of getting the nation on a sound footing without a centralized authority holding the widest powers for immediate and effective action. I agree of course about the sovereign independence, and I have tried several times to get this made the official objective of the Party. But the general feeling is that too extreme an assertion of independence will frighten away those who are convinced Home Rulers but by no means prepared to face the possibility of separation."

Alasdair MacPhee shook his head.

"I think a small Party that knew what it wanted would go much further than a large Party that is all the while trying to cut a bit here and add a bit there to keep the peace. It interferes with enthusiasm for the cause to be wasting it on arguments inside the Party. You don't believe, do you, Mr Ogilvie, that Home Rule will save Scotland? Well, I know you don't. You wouldn't want to start building a new Scotland with a parliament in Edinburgh like that comic affair in Northern Ireland. God almighty! You might as well try to build a new Scotland with the Inverness-shire County Council or the Department of Agriculture. You'll never persuade

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the young men of Scotland to die for a parliament in Edinburgh, but if you offer them even as much as Fianna Fail has offered the young men of Ireland you might find only a few at first, but the idea would grow, I think it would grow very fast. You see, there's a kind of despair about the future at the back of our minds. Down in the cities they've taken up with communism, and it's not to be wondered at when you come to look at the conditions. They're taken with the notion of what Russia has done, and they think that a communist Scotland might obtain a good deal of help from Russia. They feel that most of Europe will go communist in the next twenty years. Of course they would be as much for separation as the most advanced Nationalist if separation would bring communism with it. I don't mind admitting I've thought once or twice myself of joining the Communist Party. I have a notion that the only future for the British Empire lies with being absorbed by the United States, and I don't quite see where Scotland comes in under such a future. To my mind the British Empire is on the decline. There's a kind of tired feeling about it . . . I mean in Britain itself. These Dominions haven't found their feet yet, but if they ever do I think the British Empire will be pretty loosely joined together, and if the great idea is the domination of the English-speaking race the sooner the partnership deeds with the United States are signed the better. I don't think South Africa would join in such a combination. I think South Africa will throw in their lot with Germany if Germany ever recovers . . . well, I say 'if ever', but of course Germany must recover, mustn't it?"

"I think this fellow Hitler looks like achieving something," John agreed. "I can't say I view the prospect of a recovered Germany with much pleasurable anticipation, but I think we have to face up to such a recovery."

"Och, the Germans aren't so bad. Now, if they were to go communist I believe communism would go right ahead in Scotland. But you mustn't think I'm more of a communist than a Nationalist. I want to keep Scotland out of these great combinations. I believe the way Scotland is situated on the map of Europe we should be better with the motto *Sinn Féin*. I'm afraid I can't express myself the way you can, Mr Ogilvie, but it's in my soul that we have in us the endurance and the self-denial to make of Scotland at least another Denmark. I'm not much taken by this imperial federa-

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tion business. To my thinking, that kind of a British Empire would be bound to fight with America sooner or later, and I think the big men of money will see that and aim at union with America, and if it's to be a choice whether Scotland is to be a small and pretty insignificant part of a great world combine like that I'd liefer Scotland cut clear and remained European. We and Ireland would be better off as a maritime outpost of Europe than a . . ." He hesitated.

"A backwater of Britamerica?" John suggested.

"Yes, yes. A backwater is what we would be. Just exactly what we would be."

"Europe is in a bit of a muddle at present."

"But it won't remain in a muddle for ever," the younger man insisted earnestly.

"You mean communism will spread from Russia? Well, I'd sooner Scotland went communist with Russia than slowly withered away," John affirmed. "But I don't like the idea of identifying Scottish Nationalism with communism. The Russians have stressed the encouragement they have given to the preservation of individuality among the Soviets, but the doctrine itself is hostile to the individuality of man or nation, and the trend must be toward standardization. After all, the fundamental objective is to obtain for every man a fairer share of the economic wealth which progress has created, and the cooperation vital to the achievement of that objective must be carried through at the expense of the individual. Mind you, I think it's easy to exaggerate the importance of the individual, or rather of the individual's privileges. Anyway, he can be standardized as easily by Press and wireless as by officials. So I don't know why I bother about the particular design. There's the Fascist pattern as well, but that is really only another aspect of communism, to judge by these National Socialists in Germany, who as far as I can make out are just communists in a Boy Scout disguise. I wish you'd study the theory of Social Credit. I think myself this has gone very near to solving the problem of combining the advantages of communism with the advantages of individualism."

"I notice you never say much about Socialism, Mr Ogilvie."

"I think Socialism is more a state of mind than a positive creed. It is really the equivalent of the Liberalism of an earlier generation.

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If somebody asked you what you proposed to make of a sovereign Scotland and you replied 'a Socialist state', it would be considered a pious aspiration. Like *Liberté, Egalité, and Fraternité* for the French who tried to destroy the Christian Faith and with it the only system of practical ethics by which their motto could have been put into practice. We are a nation of ferocious individualists in Scotland. Hence the conspicuous success of the Protestant Reformation. Hence the appeal of Presbyterianism. Hence the economic triumphs of the Scot. Hence the disgraceful show Scotland makes beside cooperative countries like Norway or Finland or Denmark, all three of which enjoy less natural advantages than our own country. The same was once true of Ireland, which lost every war by sacrificing the cause to the individual and usually following up that by sacrificing the individual, until those young men in 1916 redeemed their country from the curse of excessive individualism with their own blood, not offering it as a soldier offers it with the hope that he will be lucky enough to keep it, but with the deliberate intention of martyrdom as a witness to the truth by which they believed their country could attain its salvation, material, moral, and spiritual. We have no men like that to shame our country out of its individualism. . . ."

"Have we not?" Alasdair MacPhee interrupted.

"And if we had," John went on, "I have no faith that our country possesses any longer the spiritual force to respond to such a martyrdom."

"You don't think so, Mr Ogilvie?"

"I wish to God I did," John sighed.

"One can but try," Alasdair muttered. "If I came to you with a few young men willing to die, would you accept the responsibility of planning the way their lives would serve best the object for which they were offered?"

"It is not time yet to exact death from young men, but if the spirit of such young men is willing to face even death I will lead, the most forlorn hope."

"I take you at your word, Mr Ogilvie, and I'll hold you to it. Maybe I won't worry you again for a year, maybe not for two years, but I will be worrying you again. An act of faith, ay, that's what the country demands, an act of faith. I've kept you awake talking a long time. You'd like to sleep."

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"We'll dream together," said John, and rising from the couch he put out the lamp.

Three hours later the inn was full of the sound of sleepy travellers mustering for the walk down to the quay. It was not that they desired the congeniality of companionship at that hour of the morning, but to be all together was a kind of guarantee that the *Puffin* would not sail without them. The air was motionless with frost. The zenith was thick with burning diamonds; but eastward and westward where the stars were rising and setting they scintillated with many colours, orange and steel-blue, faint violet and sullen red, and the familiar constellations had to be sought for in unfamiliar parts of the sky leaning at unfamiliar angles. The main street of the little seaport was powdered with snow, and when the travellers reached the wooden pier the smell of the tangle came up between the planks pungent as iodine.

The *Puffin* was a small, old-fashioned steamship stoutly built to meet the Minch at its fiercest but completely indifferent to the comfort of her passengers. A table ran down the middle of the saloon, which was surrounded with padded racks for hopeful sleepers. The atmosphere was permeated by the smell of food which had been cooked in the little galley at the forward end, eaten at the narrow table, or vomited in the dimness of those sleeping racks through the years. There was a ladies' cabin for four on the starboard side in which for fifty years little girls on the way to and from one of the academies on the mainland, older girls on the way to and from service in Glasgow, school teachers on the way to and from remote island schools, and in summer a few adventurous tourists in search of fairies and folk-songs had wondered why God allowed seasickness. The saloon and cabin comprised the first-class accommodation. The third-class passengers had to stand or crouch exposed to the weather along with the sheep in another part of the boat, for which privilege they paid but a slightly less exorbitant sum for their tickets than the first-class passengers.

Two or three years before this January of 1931 indignation with a heavily subsidized company which invited its clients to tolerate conditions of transport that belonged to a nineteenth-century conception of the Hebrides had compelled the shipping company to

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build new ships, though at the same time the Government raised the subsidy. It was in one of these, the *Lochiel*, that John had expected to cross to the islands. Had she not gone into dock with engine trouble he and Pdraig would have boarded her direct from the train, and now in the starry darkness of this winter morning they would have been fast asleep in a stateroom with chrom um-plated taps and electric reading-lamps and all the ugly petty little comforts of modern travel. Instead he had met Alasdair Mac 'hee and left him at the inn, an elation in his soul he had not known after that dismal morning two years ago when the result of the first Nationalist poll in a by-election had been announced and Edinburgh turned back to a grey monument of former grandeur, seeing in the life that was quenched that morning like a city of the dead.

He could see now the disappointment in Helen Gow's face, and hear the break in Jean Cumming's magical voice slightly husky from speech after speech trying to stir the heart of Midlothian to beat again. He had tried to persuade Helen Gow that the smallness of the Nationalist poll had been no smaller than was to be expected, and indeed so far as he was concerned that had been true; but the tall dark girl with the sombre fanatical eyes had crumpled under the disappointment. 'We'll get nowhere,' she had moaned. 'We'll never win Scotland the way we've started. And for goodness' sake, Jean Cumming, don't start talking about Robert Bruce and the spider. Robert Bruce never found himself up against North Midlothian electors.' Yes, the result had been a blow for the enthusiasts, and the maddening part was that the country might have been kept guessing about the strength of the National movement if those in charge of the Party's tactics had not been such a set of innocent optimists. The Liberals had scented the possibility of renovating their façade by painting it with Home Rule. The director of the Liberal campaign department had asked for an interview with himself and enquired what he would take to swing the Nationalist vote to Liberalism on a pledge to make Home Rule for Scotland a chief objective of the Liberal programme. 'You can have any Highland seat you want if you'll stand as a Liberal.' And when he had protested that he had ceased to be a Liberal since the fundamental weakness of Liberalism had been exposed after an opportunity such as no country had granted a political party, in the 1906 election, the director of the Liberal campaign department,

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had asked what that mattered. Did not Ogilvie want Home Rule and would he not admit that Home Rule was more feasible if sponsored by one of the great political parties already in existence? 'Withdraw your candidate from North Midlothian and join us. It's a great opportunity I'm offering.' It had been clear that the Liberals completely misjudged the strength of the Nationalist vote, and it had seemed clever tactics to keep them in ignorance. But when he had discussed the business with the Party leaders they had only swelled up with fresh optimism. They were going to give the old-established Parties as big a fight in North Midlothian as they had given them in the Glasgow Rectorial by chasing home Stanley Baldwin with only sixty-six votes to spare. And so North Midlothian had been fought and lost as utterly as an inglorious Flodden. The Liberals had looked elsewhere for the fresh paint their façade required. They had realized that Home Rule for Scotland was no use to their campaign for regeneration. The Lion was not rampant; it was safely couchant. . . .

"Will you be lying down, Mr Ogilvie?" the steward was asking. "It's a fine calm morning, but it will be pretty cold on deck."

"That was a nice trick you played upon us over the *Lochiel*," said John.

"Yes, indeed, it was very unfortunate, Mr Ogilvie. But och, we'll be off Fuia by twelve o'clock. You won't find it so bad at all. Och, I tell you I like the old *Puffin* better than the *Lochiel*. It's a very homy ship."

And this was true. Fifty years of common discomfort had established a spirit of intimacy in that saloon which the *Lochiel* would never achieve even if she should last as long as the *Puffin*, a most improbable contingency.

"I'd like to go up on deck," said Padraig. "Do you think there's a chance of seeing the *Aurora Borealis*, steward?"

"It's too far into the morning for the *fir chlis*—the Merry Men as we call them. They were beautiful on Tuesday evening. I never saw them better. But you'll be going to the islands, I suppose. You're bound to see them."

So Padraig went up the companion to trudge the deck in the starlight, and John retired to the sleeping-rack. Yet notwithstanding the briefness of his sleep on the sofa of the inn smoking-room he could not sleep again. The talk with Alasdair MacPhee

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became much more exciting in retrospect than it had seemed at the time. Above the ground-bass of the snoring passengers in the racks the memory of it was like a melody. If in all Scotland half a dozen young men felt like Alasdair MacPhee about the future there was hope. If there were seven men this year there might be forty-nine next year and in 1933 three hundred and forty-three—'34, '35, '36. By 1936 well over a hundred thousand if every young man multiplied himself by seven each year. That was not an impossible feat. The Fascists in Italy and those German Nationalists had multiplied themselves at a comparable rate. The rebirth of Ireland had been achieved with far fewer numbers relative to the sum-total of the population. The Greek patriots who had saved their country in that year of 1916 had seemed few enough at first, and fewer still the Poles who snatched the living ember from the ashes of Prussia, Russia, and Austria. Even by next year it should be possible with forty-nine young men of the quality of Alasdair MacPhee to begin a new kind of a campaign.

The regular chug-chug of the screw in the dead calm water through which the steamer was cutting her way made the future so much easier than it would have seemed if the *Puffin* had been tossing upon the short and savage seas of the Minch in a storm. Chug-chug! Chug-chug! . . . an unbroken stream of Alasdair MacPhees. Chug-chug . . . chug . . . John fell asleep.

By eleven o'clock of a crystalline morning the *Puffin* reached the roadstead of the long grey island of Flodday where the fishing-boat that always took John to his own islands was waiting. The patriarchal skipper Aulay MacAulay was sitting at the helm, his beard breaking over his chest like a wave. After Roderick Mackenzie's daughter carried him off to Glasgow, John had given up crossing to the Shiels from the mainland and found a successor to him on the island of Flodday.

"Welcome to the country, Mr Ogilvie," the octogenarian shouted in Gaelic from the boat. "Peautiful weather for the islands. How are you?" And presently when John was seated by him in the stern he added, with an expression of grave criticism. "Ach, my goodness, Mr Ogilvie, you're looking fery whit. What haff you been doing to yourself to look so whit whateffer? Terribly whit you are."

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"I've been working rather hard," John told him.

"There you are now! It was time you came back to the country, right enough. And how are you, Padraig?"

This was shouted to where Padraig was tucked away in the bows.

The boy shouted back in Gaelic that he was extremely well and most happy to be once again bound for the islands.

"Fery good, fery good indeed," old Aulay muttered to John. Then he handed the helm to John and cut a pipeful from a twist of black tobacco and lighted up, not without difficulty owing to the foulness of the pipe. After three puffs and six expectorations over the side of the boat the pipe was put back in his pocket, and he put out a great gnarled hand to take the helm again; but John held on to it.

Steering was easy enough upon this breathless day, and the islands crouching in the sea some twenty miles to the north stood out clearly in the low thin rays of the wintry sun.

Once only did the pearl-blue water cause John's grasp of the tiller to tighten as the *Flora* swung round in the tide. The surface of the smooth water was dimpled with miniature eddies, and bubbled like a stew-pot beginning to boil. The noise of the sucking tide was audible above the engine.

"The stream of the barking dogs," said John.

"Fery good to-day," old Aulay commented.

This was the worst of the many overfalls in the seas round the Shiel Islands, unnavigable by a small boat in a gale when the tide was running against the wind.

"Will Scotland be equally unnavigable if the north wind blows too fiercely?" John muttered to himself.

"*Gaothe tuath!*" old Aulay exclaimed, shaking his head. "The norss wind is a fery cold wind. Yes, indeed, my goodness, the norss wind is cold, right enough."

NANPHANT, BY CADGWITH,
SOUTH CORNWALL

Jan. 25th, 1931.

Darling Athene,

I started to answer your last letter in the train, but decided to wait until I got back here.

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First of all about your staying longer over in Boston. You must do what you think is best not only for Arthur but also for yourself. This absurd idea of marrying an actress perhaps ten years older than himself must somehow be crushed. I find it difficult not to write and point out to him that this kind of engagement is part of the stock in trade of mid-Victorian novelists, but, don't worry, I shall not intervene.

I was a little perturbed by your suggestion that you might stay over on the other side of the Atlantic indefinitely without affecting my peace of mind. I do realize that this political preoccupation of mine and what may have seemed the threat of moving permanently to the islands have made you ask yourself questions about the future. . . . Still I must protest that even to think of writing that an absence of a few months won't be noticed by me is . . .

John paused for the appropriate adjective, and looked across the room at his daughter who was sitting by the window of the study deep in a book.

"How's Katy getting on?" he enquired.

"I've finished *What Katy Did*," his ten-year-old daughter replied, without raising her eyes from the page.

"What are you reading now?"

"*Don Juan*," she murmured, still intent.

John was under the impression that he jumped perceptibly, and he glanced across at Corinna to see if she had noticed the movement. Her eyes were still upon the page.

"That's not very interesting, is it?" he asked as nonchalantly as he could.

"Um. Frightfully," Corinna assured him.

"Where have you got to?"

"To where he's with Haidée on the island."

She raised her eyes from the page as she spoke, to look straight at him.

"Oh, yes," he said hastily and bent again over his letter:

I stopped at that moment to find a suitable word, and asked Corinna what she was reading. "Don Juan," she tells me. Now that's the kind of problem I should like your help to solve. Do I tell her it's not a suitable book for a little girl, or do I say

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nothing but trust to her being bored presently as surely everybody must be bored by Don Juan sooner or later? I may have assumed the responsibility for her education, but I didn't bargain to do it without any help from you, my dearest. However, I recognize that Miss Blanche Halloway is more of a threat to Arthur's future than Don Juan to Corinna's, and so I must accept your decision to stay on guard in America.

Perhaps it is the effect of your absence, but it seems to me that Corinna is growing much more like you all the while. Just now when those blue eyes looked up at me over Byron they seemed set in her face at exactly the same slant I love in her mother's and the expression in them to be the same. I think that because her eyes are blue and her hair light-brown we've assumed too readily that she is more of an Ogilvie than a Gilmer. Don't stay away too long.

Well, now for my news. Even if the weather is reasonably kind during the next few weeks there is no chance of our being in the house before June at the very earliest. Padraig and I were lucky with our weather. Calm and frosty. We slept with the workmen in their hut. The roof is on, I'm glad to say, but they've not started the harling of the outside walls. We had three nights on the island. On the way back South we went on from Portrose to Mallaig and drove to Glenfinnan, where I sought to impress on Padraig the true essence of Jacobitism.

Again John laid down his pen. He was back in that chapel at the head of Loch Shiel, standing by the open west door and looking down at the rococo monument to Charles Edward Stuart erected by a loyal and pious Macdonald on the lonely level green where once upon a time the standard of that star-crossed adventure had been raised. It was an equal affront to art and nature, that preposterous column surmounted by the kilted figure, and yet how fantastically alive it was. Not the Winged Victory thrust at eternity with a sharper assertion of life.

Summer or winter that chapel at Glenfinnan is haunted by a brooding melancholy. It is a precious casket laden with a weight of frustrated human hopes. And the curiously Italianate effect of the interior somehow speaks for the exiles that saw Lochaber

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no more. It is as if here the thought of home tried to reach them by shedding something of home and assuming the semblance of the churches made familiar by exile. If the memorial in Rome to the last of the Stuarts were brought here from St Peter's it would not look out of place against the marble of Glenfinnan.

I had sent away Pádraig to study the motto in Gaelic and English at the base of the monument, intending to sit for a while in a state of mind between prayer and meditation. The day was so still that I could hear the fluttering of the thrushes and the blackbirds among the rhododendrons in the churchyard through the open west door. Then I heard a footstep and turned round to see a thin sharp-featured man with grizzled sandy hair who came along to where I was sitting and asked if I could tell him where the priest's house was. I found he had brought a great bunch of white malmaison carnations for the altar. There was something vaguely familiar about him and as I was taking him along toward the chapel-house I asked him his name. And it turned out to be Rupert Fenwick, the young brother of my first love Connie.

"Father, what's a jelick?"

"A what?"

"It says:

*She wore two jelicks—one was of pale yellow,
Of azure, pink, and white was her chemise."*

"I'm afraid I don't know, Corinna."

"And what's a baracan?"

"Baracan?"

*"And the striped white gauze baracan that bound her,
Like fleecy clouds about the moon, flowed round her."*

"It's some part of a Turkish dress, I suppose."

"Well, I knew it was that," said Corinna severely, turning back to the book.

John went on with his letter.

It was strange meeting this middle-aged colonel whom I hadn't seen since he was a carrot-haired lower boy, because it was his

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father who fed my youthful Jacobitism, and it was rather pleasant to find him faithful to a long-lost cause. I found that his two sisters who were very little older than myself are now both grand-mothers. Another strange thing was that I should have Padraig with me because of course Ellen Fitzgerald was his sister Connie's great friend. We all three took the toy steamer down Loch Shiel. Fenwick was going on a pious pilgrimage to Moidart, but Padraig and I got off at Kilcolly because I wanted to pay my respects to Canon MacLeay.

John laid down his pen again. He was thinking of the old priest, now so frail, by whom on an April morning nearly eight years ago he had been received into the Church. The experience was still able to make him pensive, thank God. It was still a welcome reflection that his mind had been made up from the moment he had heard the news of Fitz's death, but that he had waited to weave religious and political conviction together with a single gesture of faith. A spiritual imperialism and internationalism was to blend with a political nationalism expressed by many small states. The Soviets were aiming at the equivalent, substituting economics for religion. And then one day after visiting Glenfinnan he had boarded the same toy steamer intending to go to Acharacle, and at Kilcolly half-way up the loch he had disembarked on a sudden whim, and found the chapel in the wood. And that had been the end of twenty years of waiting to make up his mind. Yes, the old Canon had seemed very frail last week, and behind his blessing when they had set out back to the boat there had been the feeling that it was not they but he who was setting out upon a journey.

The old man had aged very much since I saw him last summer. I do not feel that I shall see him again.

And now I am back at Nanphant to find our daughter deep in Don Juan. She has just asked me what a jellick is. It's apparently something you wear with a chemise, but what I don't know. However, I daresay by to-morrow she will be reading Hans Andersen or Little Women.

I shall have to go north again next month to do some political speaking, but I'll get Ellen Fitzgerald to come here and I'll set Corinna plenty of work while I'm away. Ellen and Padraig will

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have to go over to Ireland for the Easter holidays, and I'll take Corinna to stay with Prudence at Erpingham after the Truro Show. Then we'll put in a few days with my father and step-mother in Hampstead. I tried to persuade Henry Pendrives to put off showing the daffodil he called after Corinna till next year when I heard you wouldn't be back. But he won't, for there are rumours of a rival

Do you think there's a hope of your getting back in time to make a state entry into Tigh nan Ròn? I was rather worried about the effect on the seals of our building so near their special swimming bath, but the workmen assured me that they've not deserted it. Padraig and I didn't see any while we were on the island. I had a few doubts whether we ought not to have built the house where the old shepherd's bothy is on Church Island, such a business is it getting the material to Castle Island. Still, I think you'll agree when you see the loggia above the seals' swimming bath and the view of the mainland as I saw it on those lucid January days that it was worth waiting for.

Corinna frowned just as John was finishing his letter to Athene.

"What's the matter now?" he asked.

"I liked *Don Juan* at first, but it's getting frightfully boring."

"I couldn't agree more," said John.

"Are you frightfully busy?"

"No, I've finished my letter to your mother."

"Well, would you mind reading *Lob Lie by the Fire*, or no, read me *Our Field*. I think that's a lovely story, don't you? I think it's almost my favourite. I think it's much nicer than *Don Juan*."

So it was Mrs Ewing not Lord Byron who was interrupted by the entrance of Loveday with tea.

"What finally persuaded you that Byron can be boring?" John asked.

She showed him the last two lines of the third canto:

*"I'll prove that such the opinion of the critic is
From Aristotle passim.—See Ποιητικῆς.*

"What is that last word?" Corinna exclaimed with childhood's severe disapprobation.

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"It's Greek. I think we'll start to-morrow on the Greek alphabet," her father announced.

Two days before the Truro Daffodil Show John drove over to Pendarves House to make enquiries about *Golden Corinna*, the daughter of *Saffron Maid* and Narcissus Triandrus whose first green thread had appeared from the earth two or three months after Corinna herself was born. He found Henry Pendarves restless and excited.

"I do believe the anxiety about *Golden Corinna* is responsible for this sudden silvering of your locks, Henry," John said to his kinsman.

"Yes, Ethel told me how white I was getting."

"Not your glass?"

"What do you mean?" the tall daffodil-grower asked, thrusting out his long lean neck in surprise at the question.

"You brush your hair before a glass, don't you?"

"Never. Never look at myself in a glass. I've got better things to look at. I tell you what, John, if *Golden Corinna* doesn't get a First Class Certificate the day after to-morrow I'll give up daffodils, I will, by G——, I will. I'll be seeing the first of my rhododendrons the year after next, and so I can afford to give up daffodils."

"But you won't, Henry."

"I will if those damned judges try to fob me off with an Award of Merit for *Golden Corinna*."

"Why should they?"

"I don't know. I made a mistake in not showing her last year. And that was your fault."

"Well, I did want to be present and Athene and I couldn't get out of that Italian trip. As it is, Athene's going to miss *Golden Corinna's* début."

"I'm sorry, John, I'm sorry. But I couldn't postpone showing her for another year. Geoffrey Vivian has something pretty hot up his sleeve for next year. And they're getting very shy of giving F.C.C.'s."

"I know, Henry, I know. It can't be helped. But it is particularly disappointing that Athene can't be here. It's her birthday

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on the fourteenth and it was on her birthday that you succeeded in pollinating *Saffron Maid* just eleven years ago."

"Dreadful!"

"What is?"

"Time. I don't mind growing old, John. But it'll be a horrid nuisance if I have to die just when I'm looking forward to seeing one of my rhododendrons flower for the first time. Yes, eleven years ago. And *Golden Corinna* has broken the rule. The general rule is that the seed-parent gives form and the pollen-parent gives colour. All the other seeds from that cross stuck to the rule, and I had just a bunch of ordinary *Triandrus* hybrids varying from cream to sulphur yellow. But *Golden Corinna* except for her superbly-shaped unfrilled trumpet is *Saffron Maid* over again. I ought to have called her *Saffron Corinna*, and I would have if you hadn't objected. What a colour! By G——, John, if I don't get a F.C.C. . . . I should have half a dozen flowers in absolutely perfect condition. I'm not showing anything else. I want those confounded judges to realize that I regard *Golden Corinna* as my masterpiece."

"Well, *Corinna* herself will be there to admire her namesake."

"I like that child of yours, John. She took a sharp dislike last year to these infernal Poeticus-Tazetta crosses they call Poetaz. Said she thought they looked as if they were trying to squeeze one another off the stalk, and by G——, that's exactly what the brutes do look like. Now, Jennifer's boy, who's called after me as you may remember, doesn't know the difference between a daffodil and a buttercup. By G——, he said to me 'Grandpa,' which is a beastly form of address anyway, 'Grandpa, look at the pretty buttercups.' Buttercups! I was disgusted."

"He's not yet four, Henry."

"A child ought to know the difference between a daffodil and a buttercup before it's two. It's Tom Keigwin's fault." Tom Keigwin, a Commander R.N., was Henry Pendarves' son-in-law. "And Tom Keigwin is a Cornishman. He ought to know better," the daffodil-raiser growled.

"By the way, it's Jennifer's birthday the day after to-morrow. Will she run over from Plymouth for the Show?" John asked.

"Yes, Ethel tells me she's coming, but she didn't say anything about its being her birthday. How old is she?"

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"Henry, Henry, you're growing into an eccentric. Your daughter will be twenty-seven."

"I'm blessed if I know how you keep these dates and ages in your head, John. It's all I can do nowadays not to be caught napping by one of my own daffodil-crosses."

Two days later *Golden Corinna* was given the First Class Certificate of the Royal Horticultural Society. It was the only F.C.C. awarded that year, and there was not one of Henry Pendarves' keenest rivals to grudge it to so supreme a flower. The triumph was celebrated by a family dinner at Pendarves House to which John contributed his last four bottles of Pol Roger 1921.

"It's a year younger than *Golden Corinna*, but how much more perishable the gold," he said to Henry Pendarves.

"I don't know anything about champagne," the latter grunted.

"Take my word for it, Henry, this vintage is worthy even of the noblest daffodil."

Corinna herself had been allowed for the first time in her life to sit up to late dinner, and the host put her at his right hand. Jennifer Keigwin was there with her husband, a genial tanned naval officer of about thirty-five whose benevolent smile was more eloquent than his tongue. She was sitting opposite John who was on his hostess's left.

"You didn't bring Henry Pendarves Junior," John remarked.

"My dear, I didn't dare risk his calling *Golden Corinna* a buttercup. The wretched child wouldn't have been allowed inside Pendarves House again, and next month it's *his* birthday."

"Oh, John, it is a shame Athene isn't with us," exclaimed Christabel. "I can remember that double birthday dinner on April 14th, 1920, so well."

"I should think you could. It's only eleven years ago."

"Only eleven years ago! Isn't that long enough?"

"You'll find it eleven months when you have children of your own," said John.

Christabel threw a quick glance across the table at her husband, Roger Vivian, the nephew and heir of Henry Pendarves' old friend and daffodil rival, Geoffrey Vivian, who was sitting on Mrs Pendarves' right. Then she pulled John close to whisper something in his ear.

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"In September, eh? To be published about the same time as Roger's next novel, what?"

"Shut up, John, it's still a secret," Christabel muttered.

"Who from? Roger?"

"No, of course not. But Father doesn't know yet."

"I'll bet he does."

"He doesn't, really."

"Sez you."

John lifted his glass and nodded at what the reviewers called one of our most promising young novelists.

"Here's to your next novel. Christabel tells me it's to be published in September.

Roger Vivian smiled self-consciously as he acknowledged the toast.

"By Jove," John whispered to Christabel, "I didn't know Roger could be embarrassed by the simple facts of life. My god, he's blushing now. Look!"

"John, don't be so foul. Isn't it a shame that Richard and Hugh aren't with us. They were both at that birthday party eleven years ago."

"When's Hugh going to be married?"

"He's coming back from Bolivia to marry Mary in October."

John looked over to where Mary Trehawke was sitting on the left of Henry Pendarves—an auburn-haired girl of twenty.

"A pity her father was killed in the war. You'd have liked him, Christabel."

"But I remember him perfectly well. He had a very loud voice."

"Terrific. And wasn't I glad to hear the sound of it one December morning in 1917 when I got away from Athens after the most nerve-wracking few days I'd ever spent in my life and found his sloop *Snapdragon* in the harbour."

John's fancy went travelling back to that grey windless morning and the grey ship flying the White Ensign and the large genial Cornishman in command. The *Snapdragon* had been torpedoed in the Bay of Biscay hardly a month before the Armistice, and Trehawke had been drowned.

"It was sad for Mrs Trehawke having to sell Rosevean," said Christabel. "It would have been so awfully jolly if Mary and

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Hugh could have lived there instead of going out to Bolivia."

"When's Richard going to get married?" John asked.

"I don't think he can bring himself to concentrate on one woman," Christabel laughed.

"Well, Sir Richard Pendarves will be wanting to see an heir soon," said John, looking at the portrait of the Cavalier over the mantelpiece. "And nothing you can do for him will be any good, my lass."

"John, if your mother had been a boy, you'd be sitting where Father is now. Isn't that strange to think?"

"Very strange," he agreed, "as strange as to think that if you'd been a boy Roger might still have had a novel appearing next September, but he certainly couldn't be expecting either a son or a daughter. Pull yourself together, Christabel. I have been devoted to you since I first saw your turkey's-egg countenance at this very table twelve years ago, but you're a rotten sexologist, and your sexological reflections . . ."

Christabel turned round to her brother-in-law.

"John's being foul to me, Tom. I'll talk to you for a bit."

Commander Thomas Keigwin grinned benevolently.

"What were you saying to Christabel?" Jennifer leaned over to ask John.

"I was admiring her superlative logic," he replied.

"What's logic?" Corinna demanded from the other end of the table.

"You find out from Roger," said her father. "I'm going to talk to Cousin Ethel."

"Well, I asked Roger what a jelick is, and he didn't know either. I thought people who wrote books knew everything."

Presently Roger Vivian was engaged in trying to restore Corinna's belief in the knowledgeableness of writers. Henry Pendarves was demonstrating to Mary Trehawke the monstrosity of an economic order which drove Cornishmen out to earn a living from mining for tin in Bolivia when there was still plenty of tin in the Duchy itself. At Mrs Pendarves' end of the table they were talking about the various Tres, Pols, and Pens they had seen at the Truro Show. Commander Keigwin was beaming at every conversation in turn without contributing a word to any of them until at last he raised his glass and woofed:

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"Well, jolly good luck to everybody!"

"Oh, drink many happy returns of the day to me, Tom," his wife begged, twinkling.

But this was too much for the Commander's eloquence. He could only drain his glass and grin at her.

It was then that Geoffrey Vivian rose to his feet, a Pickwick of a man and like his great prototype a bachelor.

"Ladies and gentlemen, though I don't know why I call you that since to me you're all boys and girls."

"Bah!" ejaculated the host.

"Don't you bleat at me, Henry. I'm three years older than you, my boy. Well, it's my privilege and pleasure to propose a triple toast this evening, and that is my lifelong friend Henry Pendarves, his elder daughter whose twenty-seventh birthday we are celebrating, and the glorious flower he has raised and named after his youngest guest.

"Of Henry Pendarves himself I do not intend to say much. We are proud of him as a Cornishman, a father, and a gardener. A year ago his younger daughter married my nephew and so once again after an interval of over a century a Vivian has married a Pendarves, just when I was thinking that if he didn't soon get married I would have to do something in that line myself."

"Oh, Nunky, why didn't you tell me and I'd never have married Roger?" Christabel exclaimed.

She was called to order by the other guests and Geoffrey Vivian went on:

"However, this evening it is not Christabel's birthday we are celebrating but that of her elder sister Jennifer. We all wish her many happy returns of the day and we wish her and her gallant husband and her small son long life and health and happiness. Finally, I raise my glass to *Golden Corinna*. My old friend and I have been competing against one another for many years now. Sometimes he has got the better of me and sometimes I have got the better of him. But I have no hesitation in saying that I am as proud of the F.C.C. awarded to *Golden Corinna* as if the flower were one of my own. If I were a novelist like my nephew Roger or a dramatist like my friend John Pendarves Ogilvie, I might be able to describe in worthy language that massive golden perianth and severe saffron corona, but I have no gift of eloquence, being

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myself only a simple old gardener. Henry Pendarves and I have had our arguments . . .”

“No,” interposed the host sharply.

“We haven’t, Henry!” Geoffrey Vivian exclaimed in surprise.

“You do all the arguing,” declared Henry Pendarves. “I merely state my opinion and stick to it.”

“But, Henry, that is arguing,” his wife pointed out.

“It’s not what I call arguing,” he affirmed.

“What I was going to add,” Geoffrey Vivian went on, “was that there can never be any argument about *Golden Corinna*. She will speak for herself when all of us who rejoiced to-day at the recognition accorded to her are dust. Yes, even the little lady whose name she bears. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Henry Pendarves, Jennifer Keigwin, and *Golden Corinna*.”

The company after drinking the toast called upon the head of the house to reply. He wriggled in his chair, and his lanky neck shot back and forth in embarrassment.

“Speech! Speech!” the inexorable guests called.

At last Henry Pendarves plunged up from his chair.

“We were having a very pleasant evening till Geoffrey Vivian started all this nonsense,” he mumbled. “I’m very pleased the judges were so sensible, and I think that’s all there is to it.”

And down into his chair he plunged back again.

Then John proposed the health of his hostess, and Jennifer drank many happy returns of the day to Athene, and finally Corinna was called upon to make a speech.

“Oh, but I can’t make a speech,” she said earnestly. “I can’t, can I, Father?”

“Well, I think you can just say ‘thank you’ for your mother,” John told his daughter. “She’s not here, and so you’ll have to take her place.”

Corinna rose from her chair.

“I’ve never made a speech. I’m terribly glad that Cousin Henry’s daffodil was such an enormous success, and thank you for calling it after me, Cousin Henry. And thank you for a lovely time, Cousin Ethel, and I wish Mummy was here, but I expect she wouldn’t like making a speech very much.”

The small oratress stood in silence, her brows knitted, her lips tense. Then crimsoning she sat down abruptly amid loud applause.

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"That's a jolly good speech, Corinna," said Tom Keigwin earnestly. "A jolly good speech." Then he looked across the table at his wife. "You know, I couldn't have made a speech like that, Jennifer, to save my life."

On the way back to Nanphant in the car Corinna said to her father:

"It wasn't really a jolly good speech, was it?"

"It was all right," John told her.

Corinna shook her head.

"No, it wasn't," she declared. "It was frightfully stupid."

"Ah, well, it wouldn't do at your age to be too eloquent."

"Why?"

"Well, people expect little girls to be modest and not to be too sure of themselves."

"I like Cousin Henry," Corinna declared presently.

"He's pretty shy, even at his age," said her father.

"Well, he's like a nice bear or something in a fairy story who can talk."

"What did you and he talk about at dinner?"

"He told me about the first time one of his daffodils got an Award of Merit. He said he was so excited that he walked all the way back from Truro to St Pedoc, and every now and then he said he had to jump in the air and let out a hoot. I think Mairi would have thought he was with the fairies."

"Mairi will be thinking you've been with the fairies. Do you know what the time is?"

"No, what is it?"

"Ten minutes after midnight!"

"Is it?" she exclaimed in awe. "Oh, I've never been up as late as that. Up till now my latest was eleven minutes to eleven. Well, it was really only eleven and half minutes to eleven, but I wasn't out of the room after Mummy saw the time for about thirty seconds. She thought it was ten, not eleven. It was when I was sitting up for my birthday when I was nine. This year I sat up till half-past ten. Do you remember? I hoped you'd think it was only half-past nine."

"Ah, I know that old clock too well," said John.

"It was Grandfather who gave it to Mummy, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it belonged to my mother—your Pendarves grandmother."

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"And when she was a girl she lived at St Pedoc," Corinna reminded him, as a child reminds a narrator of the sequence of an oft-told fairy story.

"She did, and I used to go and stay at Pendarves House when I was much smaller than you are now."

"What was the latest you ever sat up?" Corinna asked.

"Well, I really don't know, but I doubt if I ever sat up later than seven when I was staying at my grandfather's."

The car turned off into the deep lane then ran down to Nanphant. The waning moon of Easter was not yet risen when they reached the house and walked along the path to the front door, the perfume of mimosa very fragrant in the starshine. The night was still, and the gentle murmur of the sea mingled with the purling of the little stream that flowed down the narrow rocky cove to the sand. Mairi Macdonald looked taller than usual in her astonishment at the lateness of this hour for the child she had been looking after since she was a year old.

"*Nach eil thu ainmoch!*" she exclaimed in Gaelic, and then turning to John, "What a time to be bringing her home, Mr Ogilvie," she protested reproachfully in her quiet voice.

"Yes, it is late, Mairi, but it was a very unusual occasion."

"I'm sure it would have been," Mairi agreed, seeming with her fair hair and high cheek-bones like a saintly figure in the picture of some Flemish primitive. "There's a telegram waiting for you, Mr Ogilvie. I put it on the table in your study. *Leapaidh! Leapaidh!*" she added, turning to Corinna.

"Yes, get her off to bed, Mairi," John said. "Good-night, darling. You enjoyed yourself, eh?"

"Oh, I enjoyed myself most terrifically, and Cousin Henry is going to give me a bulb of *Golden Corinna* to plant when he lifts his daffodils in the summer."

"Good for you, and sleep well."

John kissed his daughter and went along to the study. He opened the telegram on his desk without the faintest premonition of bad news, and read:

Mother very ill think you should come

Arthur

It had been sent off that morning. She must be too ill to know

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he had been summoned. She would never have allowed a cable like that to be sent upon her birthday if she had not been too ill to know what was happening.

John was a day out in the Atlantic when a wireless message told him that Athene was dead. It had been on the Atlantic she had first met. Seventeen years ago in that golden age before the war. Her green overcoat, the colour of the cliffs of the Azores; rose complexion, flashing dark-brown eyes set with a slight slant above high cheek-bones, full mobile lips, cleft chin, soft wavy warm-brown hair, and her long-legged slender grace. Two deaths between him and her, and now she was dead. He went below to his cabin and as he turned each corner on the way it seemed that Athene in her green overcoat was disappearing round the end of the next corner as in a dream the form one seeks for ever eludes the uncontrollable eyes of sleep. When he reached the cabin he unlocked an attaché-case and took out Athene's last letter:

How I shall be thinking of you on my birthday, dearest! That birthday morning eleven years ago was the happiest birthday morning in all my life, and now after missing Corinna's tenth birthday I am to miss what I hope will be the triumph of Golden Corinna. Tell all the dear people at St Pedoc what a grief it is to me. But, dearest, because I tell you that that was the happiest birthday morning in all my life don't think that all the others since have not been perfectly happy. I feel you are still a little hurt with me for that silly letter I wrote in January in the depression of missing Corinna's birthday. I reproach myself with having led you to think that my preoccupation with Arthur's idiotic entanglement was the result of your preoccupation with politics. I do want you to believe that I would have felt bound to come over here unless you or Corinna were ill. Nothing else could have kept me in England.

I was thrilled to hear that there is a good chance of our being able to get into Tigh nan Ròn this summer, and now I want to tell you something which I think will please you. In the last talk I had with Arthur he must have realized how much this infatuation of his really was upsetting all my happiness. He

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suddenly asked me if I would go back if I were sure he wouldn't go off and get married the moment I was gone. I told him that of course I was longing to get back to you and Corinna, and he said I needn't worry any more about him. He would give me his solemn promise not to get married for a year. "John's been too good a friend to me," he said, "for me to go and spoil this new house for him." And dearest of my heart, I'm sure that he'll keep this promise.

So, I plan to come back in the middle of May, and I've planned something else, my dearest. If when Arthur is twenty-one next March he's still set on making what we all think is this completely unsuitable match, why, I think he'll just have to choose for himself and make good if he can. I've told Mrs Langridge this, and maybe my being resigned about it won't do any harm because then she won't be able to feel that his future rests quite so much with her alone, and it will be less of a temptation to spoil Arthur by giving this marriage as a present.

Oh dear, I hadn't meant to write so much about Arthur. I'd meant to write more about you and me. I love you. Your happiness is my happiness. I do not mind in what direction the fulfilment of your destiny takes me. I wish only for the rest of my life to be

Your Athene

That was written only four days before her birthday, and the letter had reached him when he was waiting for the ship in which he would hear of her death.

"John, I didn't like to ask you before, but would you come and have tea with Blanche and her mother before you sail?"

John and his stepson were in the train on their way to New York from Atlanta, where Athene had been buried beside her father and her mother.

"If it will give you pleasure," John replied. "But I don't think I can go and see old Mr and Mrs Langridge in Boston."

"Oh, there's no need for that," said Arthur quickly. "But I would like you to meet Blanche. They left their apartment. They're staying at the Picardy Hotel."

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"On West 46th Street and Broadway?" John asked.

"Yes, but how did you know?"

"That's the hotel where I stayed when I was in New York nearly twenty years ago. Do you mean to say it hasn't been pulled down yet?"

"It's pretty old-fashioned, but theatrical people stay there a lot," Arthur replied.

"So they did twenty years ago. Good God, to think that I could have a bad go of pneumonia in a place like that and recover, and that your mother in that lovely house in Atlanta and with all the care and devotion imaginable should get pneumonia and die."

"Are you very sore at me, John?" Arthur asked miserably.

"Why should I be sore at you?"

"Oh, I don't know. If I hadn't fallen in love with Blanche I guess Mother wouldn't have come over to see what she could do about it."

There was a moisture in Arthur's dark-brown eyes as he gazed out of the window at the passing landscape, and perhaps it was only that out-thrust Gilmer chin he had inherited from his mother's father which was keeping back the tears.

"You mustn't blame yourself for your mother's death. She might just as easily have caught pneumonia in England," John said gently as he leant over to pat Arthur on the shoulder. "Besides in her last letter she told me that you had promised her not to do anything for . . . not to marry Blanche for a year so that she could come back to England without worrying and help with the house on Castle Island. It's a lovely house, Arthur."

"I'll bet it is."

"Wouldn't it be a good notion if you came over to Scotland for your summer vacation?" John went on.

"Why, I believe I will, John. And you're sure you don't mind meeting Blanche?"

"Why should I?"

So next day John and Arthur went to call upon the Hallowsays at the Picardy Hotel. The smell of the steam-heated air in the crowded restless entrance lobby, although it was not turned on at full blast, was more potently evocative to John than anything since he had landed in New York. It carried him back beyond the

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visits he had made since to that spring of 1913 before he had met Athene. He looked involuntarily across to where the telephone operator was sitting before her board with its innumerable plugs and buttons. He was half expecting to see that thin girl whose delicate features by the end of the day used to seem almost transparent with fatigue, that practical, austere, exact and strangely ethereal young woman who had embodied for him the spirit of New York. What was her name? It was to her he had sent that present from Sorrento which had precipitated matters between him and Gabrielle Derozier in another April eighteen years ago. What *was* her name?"

"Hesther Sarony," he exclaimed suddenly in the elevator on the way up to the Holloways' sitting-room.

Arthur looked at him in astonishment.

"It was a name I had been trying to remember," John explained. And when he and Arthur entered the Holloways' room he looked to see if on the walls hung that steel-engraving of Vesuvius and the oil-painting of the red-capped Neapolitan fisherman playing the mandolin beside a cobalt sea which once upon a time when convalescent in a room like this had seemed beacons of European civilization. The coincidence did not extend so far as to bring him to the same sitting-room he had occupied in the Picardy Hotel.

A moment later he was aware of a fat woman into the furrows of whose countenance the powder had drifted who was advancing to meet him.

"Why, Mr Ogilvie, this is a great honour. I am so very very delighted to meet you. This is my little daughter Blanche."

A young woman with beautiful dark hair and a complexion which would probably have been called ivory before complexions were put on like stockings and demanded as much exactitude of descriptive shade, flashed deep eyes at John as she shook hands with him. He was surprised to find that the threat to Arthur's matrimonial future was a brunette. Her name had suggested she would be fair and Athene had never described her. She had pinned her hopes on convincing Arthur that Blanche would grow like her mother, and it was this potentiality of an ever-growing resemblance which had seemed Blanche's most important feature.

"Please sit down, Mr Ogilvie. You'll take a cup of tea?"

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Blanche and I always take tea in the afternoon. We're very British in our tastes. Arthur knows that. Don't you, Arthur dear?"

Perhaps time was already playing the oculist to love, John speculated, for Arthur's assent to this statement was not excessively cordial. However, perhaps he was merely embarrassed by being invited to assent to such statements in front of himself.

"Yes, indeed, Mr Ogilvie. I can't tell you how very very much Blanche and I appreciate your thoughtfulness in coming to visit us like this at such a sad moment. We had so much kindness from your dear wife. Yes indeed, her kindness is something that neither of us can ever ever forget. We grieved for you, Mr Ogilvie, and for Arthur too."

"Momma, I'm sure Mr Ogilvie knows how sorry we are," said Blanche quickly, for she saw John's eyes wandering round the room and realized that he wished to be spared her mother's condolences.

"I wish you could have seen my little girl act, Mr Ogilvie," Momma went on. "Naturally circumstances make that impossible, but it would have been such a wonderful pride and pleasure for her if you could have seen her performance. I don't think anybody can accuse me of being a fond uncritical mother—as Blanche will tell you, I've always been very very critical of her—but I really am bound to say that her performance in this play she's in now is quite outstanding. It is indeed, Mr Ogilvie. Actually it is not a very good part, but Blanche has given it what the French call a *jennasay quaw* which is quite extraordinary. Mr Ranzer . . . have you met Mr Ranzer? . . . you haven't? . . . well, of course, we think he's one of our very very best young American dramatists . . . well, as I was saying, Mr Ranzer went out of his way to tell Blanche that her performance had surprised him. He said he had no idea Olive Barton was such a good part. Wasn't that very very sweet of him? You're a dramatist yourself, Mr Ogilvie, and I'm sure you'll appreciate what a compliment like that from the author means. But it was no more than my little girl deserved. No, Blanche, I won't be quiet. I know that if circumstances had permitted Mr Ogilvie to see the play himself he would have said I was right. After all I'm only telling him what Mr Ranzer said to you, and who has a better right to give an opinion than the author of the

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play? Isn't that right, Mr Ogilvie?"

John agreed.

"There you are, Blanche. You see Mr Ogilvie appreciates what a compliment that was from Mr Ranzer and I'm sure he would have been just as complimentary as Mr Ranzer if he had had an opportunity of seeing you act. But there, as I always say, we cannot have everything in this world. That's true, is it not, Mr Ogilvie?"

"Very true indeed, Mrs Halloway."

The fat over-powdered woman sat back in her chair with the expression of a triumphant sibyl.

"And these two young people," she breathed out a sentimental sigh. "These two dear young people! I'm not going to talk about their future now, Mr Ogilvie. I know you cannot be in the mood to listen to a mother's raptures, but I do want you to know, Mr Ogilvie, what a very very great joy it has been to me to think that my sweet Blanche has chosen a fine clean-living young man like Arthur."

"Momma, I wish you wouldn't bore Mr Ogilvie," her daughter protested.

"I don't believe it will bore Mr Ogilvie at all, Blanche, to hear that a woman who has known what unhappiness means and who has seen a little—more than a little, alas!—of life's seamy side is grateful that her only child has chosen for herself a man whom she can look up to and respect."

Mrs Halloway beamed affectionately at Arthur, and the expression of her heavy-lidded eyes seemed to John like that of a crocodile regarding its intended victim. Perhaps Arthur himself felt uneasy, for he wriggled under Mrs Halloway's tribute to his behaviour.

"I know that people are apt to raise their eyebrows when they hear that a wife is older than her husband," she went on. "But I don't believe true love pays any attention to age. I always say, Mr Ogilvie, that true love is blind."

John wondered if Mrs Halloway had ever asked herself if true love was deaf as well.

"Certainly Blanche is six years older than Arthur. But what are six years? At our age, Mr Ogilvie, we know that six years are nothing. Nothing at all. When I look back to when

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Blanche was Arthur's age I could fancy it was no longer than last week."

"I suppose you don't feel like that about your first half at Eton, Arthur?" John asked. And then he wished he hadn't teased him, for his eyes looked at him like Athene's when she was not in the mood to be teased.

"I often tell Blanche that I wouldn't have any qualms about her future happiness if she and Arthur were married right away, and I said this to Mrs Langridge. Oh, what a wonderful old lady, Mr Ogilvie! A type of all that's best in our wonderful American womanhood. And Mrs Langridge agreed with me that if it wasn't for Arthur's college work she would be only too pleased if these two dear young people were married right away."

Secure of Arthur's promise to his mother, John did not cast a doubt upon Mrs Langridge's wisdom.

"Arthur must decide for himself when he will get married," he said.

"Do you hear that, Arthur?" Mrs Halloway asked, beaming triumphantly. "Why, Mr Ogilvie, I must take the liberty of telling you that you are a lovely big-hearted man. I'll admit now that I *was* just a little bit worried before I met you that you'd have high ideas for Arthur. I can't tell you what a relief it is to hear you have such confidence in dear Arthur. Blanche, I'm sure your own heart is too full, or I know you'd tell Mr Ogilvie what a lovely big-hearted man he is. And you can rely upon me, Mr Ogilvie, to look after her. Every night I take my sewing or my knitting down to the theatre and sit in her dressing-room, don't I, honey? Ah, well, Mr Ogilvie, since Mr Halloway departed this life when Blanche was only four years old I've devoted myself to her. I take no credit for that, Mr Ogilvie. I always say a mother's first duty is to her own daughter. But she means a very very great deal to me, and I can't tell you what a joy it is to me that Mr Right has come along. I don't have to tell you, Mr Ogilvie, what pitfalls there are in the theatrical profession, and how easy it is for a girl to choose the wrong man."

"Mamma, aren't we giving Mr Ogilvie some tea?" asked Blanche, who was sure that Mamma was talking much too volubly. "I don't think you need tell Mr Ogilvie anything about the stage. He's not Mrs Langridge, you know. Arthur dear, will you 'phone

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down and have them send up tea for four?" she requested in a tone of quiet command.

"And now of course you're longing to hear what I think of Blanche?" John asked when he and Arthur had left the Picardy and were walking in the direction of his own hotel.

"Mrs Halloway was talking such a lot," said Arthur. "You didn't get much chance to talk to Blanche."

"Oh, I liked your prospective mother-in-law," John assured him. "I liked her evident feeling of responsibility for her daughter."

"I think she rather overdoes it sometimes."

"Oh, it's very natural, Arthur. A pretty daughter *is* a responsibility, you know."

"You do think Blanche is pretty?" Arthur asked eagerly.

"Extremely pretty. And so like her mother."

"I don't call Mrs Halloway extremely pretty," Arthur objected.

"Ah, well, she's a woman of nearly sixty I should imagine, but if Blanche ever grew as stout as that she would be very like her."

"That's what Mother said," Arthur muttered.

"She did? Then obviously the fundamental resemblance is there."

They walked in silence along Broadway for a while. It was broken by Arthur.

"You probably can't understand why I am so much in love with Blanche," he challenged.

"I certainly can. I think she's a most attractive young woman. And you say she is a really good actress?"

"Yes, she is. She's awfully good. Mother admitted that."

"Listen, Arthur. God knows the last thing I want to do is to go to a theatre, but if it will give you any pleasure for me to see Blanche in this play I'll go to-night."

"But Mother . . ."

"Your mother would expect me to go," said John. "But I'd rather go alone."

"Yes, of course."

However, when they got back to the hotel where they were staying John found a note from Mrs Langridge begging him if he could possibly spare the time to give Mr Langridge and herself the

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pleasure of a visit from him in Boston.

"I can't manage them both, Arthur," John told him. "I think I must go to Boston I must go this afternoon, and I sail at noon the wife after to-morrow. Which am I to do?"

Arthur walked across to the window high up in the great New York hotel and gazed for a moment or two into the serene and limpid air of the city. Then he swung round abruptly.

"I'd sooner you went to see Grandma, John. I'll tell Blanche how it happened you couldn't see her. Will I come with you to Boston?"

"No, I think it'll be best if I go by myself. You will be seeing me off to-morrow."

It was very late when John reached the Langridges' house.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am for this kindness, Mr Ogilvie," said the tall old lady, tears in her big grey eyes, which seemed larger and more luminous in that shrunken countenance of hair-streaked ivory. "Mr Langridge is so sorry that he had to go to bed, but I knew you'd understand. He has been poorly all spring. It was a heartbreak that I couldn't go down to Atlanta, but I dreaded to leave him."

"I perfectly understand, Mrs Langridge."

"I was sure you would. And dear Arthur would have understood. He was always so kind and considerate. Now come right in to the dining-room. I have supper waiting for you."

John had eaten on the train, but he could not bring himself to disappoint the old lady's tender hospitality and somehow he managed to eat a second meal that did not vex her solicitude too much by its inadequacy.

After supper they sat on either side of the electric fire that seemed so much out of keeping with the heavy furniture and hangings of the room, he in a high-backed leather armchair of the 'eighties, she in a rocking-chair.

"I hope I don't fidget you, Mr Ogilvie," she said. "But I've never been able to cure myself of rocking in this funny old chair which belonged to my mother. You'll smoke a cigar, won't you? They're on the table at your hand."

"Are you sure you don't mind?" John asked.

"Indeed no. I'm even getting used to those cigarettes that Arthur always smokes, but I much prefer the smoke of a cigar even

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down and it is apt to hang about next morning in the curtains.”
of quiet “I didn’t bring Arthur along with me,” said John, “because I thought you might want to talk about his future.”

“Well, I do think it’s easier to talk without feeling that he’s around, but I feel pretty mean leaving him all alone in New York at this sad time, poor boy.”

“I saw his—his fiancée to-day.”

“You did?”

There was a brief silence while John lighted his cigar and Mrs Langridge rocked herself in her chair.

“Yes, I had tea with Mrs Halloway and—er—Blanche.”

“I think she’s such a very sweet girl. It’s a pity she’s six years older than Arthur, but I think she is a very sweet girl. I told our dear Athene that I didn’t believe she ought to worry herself too much about Arthur.”

“You think it will be a good marriage for him?” John asked.

“Why, of course it isn’t just exactly the marriage that any of us would have planned for Arthur, but dear goodness, who can plan marriage for other people?”

“I think that is what Athene was coming to realize. In her last letter she told me that Arthur had promised her to wait a year, and she added that if at the end of a year he was still set on marrying Blanche Halloway she should not try to put any more difficulties in his path.”

“Why, I’m sure I think that was wise, Mr Ogilvie.”

“And what I feel is that now Athene is no longer here Arthur’s duty lies to you and Mr Langridge. It will be what your attitude is towards this marriage, not mine, that will matter. I shall not attempt to hold him to the promise he made his mother.”

“You won’t, Mr Ogilvie?”

And in the slightly quickened rocking of her chair John fancied he discerned an anxiety about the responsibility she felt he was forcing upon her.

“In no circumstances, Mrs Langridge,” he affirmed.

“But the advice of an older man . . .” she began.

“The advice of an older man about the emotions is worthless. It would give me no pleasure to be proved right by time and it would give me pain to sacrifice Arthur’s friendship and affection by making his future wife hate me.”

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"And you think you would be proved right by time? You think this marriage would be a great mistake?" the old lady pressed.

"I find it hard to believe that when Arthur is thirty and his wife is at least thirty-six and probably thirty-eight and Mrs Halloway is still talking he will be completely convinced that he has achieved the perfection of married happiness. Do you believe he will be, Mrs Langridge?"

"But don't you think it's unwise to oppose this kind of project too strongly?" she asked, evading the direct answer to his question.

"I have not opposed it. Athene did not oppose it," John insisted firmly.

"But Arthur felt it was upsetting his dear mother very much."

"He did not feel that it was upsetting you?" John put in with a quick questioning look.

The luminous grey eyes gazing at him were clouded for an instant. Then they lightened again.

"Mr Ogilvie, I hope you don't think I encouraged Arthur."

"To suppose that his grandparents were fonder than his mother?" he asked lightly.

"That is a cruel thing to say to an old woman."

"I'm sorry. It was not meant to be cruel. I thought that was what you meant."

"You must remember that Arthur is all we have since Wacey was taken from us."

"I have never forgotten it, and Athene never forgot it."

"Indeed no, she was very good to us."

The old lady leaned over from her rocking-chair and put her pale corded hand on John's.

"For a while it was a hard struggle for me not to hate you, Mr Ogilvie. You seemed to have all that Wacey had failed to win—success, happiness, Athene, and at the end life itself."

"Why do you say 'Athene', Mrs Langridge?"

"Mr Ogilvie, you and I need no longer pretend with one another. We two know that Athene never loved my son. We must not pretend any longer now that both of them are gone. When you and I last met, hard on eleven years ago, I said to you that she loved him, and you said you were sure she did. You said that the war broke up their marriage as it broke up many a marriage, and I asked

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you if it was you that broke it up and you said 'no', and I believed you."

"Don't you believe that any longer?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Mr Ogilvie, I do believe that. But neither of us believed that Athene ever loved Wacey. I know what it was that made it impossible for Athene to go on pretending. It just made pretence impossible for her. If she had loved him she would have forgiven him even the foolish lie he told her."

John felt a sudden warmth for this old woman. He knew now why she had wanted to see him before he went back to England, and he waited for the question she could now ask without the self-deception of the answer to that other question weighing upon her mind. It came.

"Do you think that this girl loves Arthur, Mr Ogilvie?"

"I think he attracts her; but if he were a young man without expectations I think she wouldn't find it a very hard task to dispose of that attraction. Devoted as I am to Arthur, I simply cannot believe that a Harvard sophomore is capable of making a very deep appeal to a young woman who has been protected since childhood against everything except the main chance. Blanche Halloway is an actress. I understand—not from her mother or Arthur—that she really is an extremely capable actress. The genuine actress can imagine herself into any emotional condition."

"Then you believe her to be heartless? You believe that she and her mother are deliberately trapping Arthur into marriage?"

"That's going too far in the other direction. I believe that Arthur fell very much in love with Blanche and that when Mrs Halloway discovered that he was likely to be comfortably off one day she did not find her daughter's interest in this young man so unsuitable as she would certainly have found it if Arthur were dependent entirely on his own ability to make a future for himself. Let matters take their course, Mrs Langridge. If Arthur's devotion endures until he is of age, why, then the only thing will be for us all to make the best of it. It was Athene's pride which would have been most deeply wounded, and Athene . . ." John broke off.

"Forgive me, Mr Ogilvie. It was selfish of me to inflict upon you my anxiety over Arthur. Selfish and wrong. But old age is

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like that. It always seeks to gratify itself. Yes, yes," she went on before John could say anything, "I have been wicked. I was enjoying Athene's anxiety over Arthur. I was ready to give Arthur what he wanted because she had never given my dear son what he wanted. I hope that if Athene had lived I should have realized in time how wrong and selfish, how wicked and revergent I was being, but God help me, I fear that I have only found out what I was because Athene is no longer here for me to be jealous. I say 'God help me', but that is only a form of words, for I have no belief in God. All my life I have run away from reality, and taken shelter under words. It was from me our poor Wac-y inherited that ability to hide his true self beneath words."

John was silent. He could think of nothing to say that would not sound stilted and insincere.

"I am glad you were able to give Athene happiness," the old lady went on. "And that is not a form of words. It is spoken from my heart. I am glad you came. I did not expect to tell you what I have told you. I think I asked you to come because I wanted to see your unhappiness. I am wicked, Mr Ogilvie. Very old and very wicked. But somehow I had no pleasure from the thought of your unhappiness, and instead I have talked to you as I have talked to nobody since I was rocked in this very chair upon my mother's knee."

John bowed his head for a moment before he broke the silence that fell.

"I have not forgotten, Mrs Langridge," he said gravely, "that when we met last time you accepted my word without question. I have thought of you with gratitude and kindness ever since. When your note reached me in New York I had just arranged to please Arthur by going to see Blanche Hallows in that play she is now acting in. It was impossible to do that and go to Boston. I asked Arthur which he wanted me to do and he wanted me to come here. I cannot help thinking that choice marks the beginning of the end of his infatuation. I cannot say how glad I am that he did want me to come here. I think you must divine that I am too much moved by your courage to say anything adequate. But will you do something for me?"

"Why, surely I will, Mr Ogilvie," said the old lady.

"Will you leave me that rocking-chair in your will?"

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"This foolish old rocking-chair of mine? Why, what can you want with that?"

"A souvenir of you and a reminder to myself."

"A reminder of what, Mr Ogilvie?"

"Of the grace of God," he answered.

John had arranged before he left Cornwall that Mairi Macdonald was to take Corinna with her to Erpingham, and it was Prudence who had had to give Corinna the news of her mother's death. When the *Ruritania* reached Southampton he found letters from them both waiting for him:

ERPINGHAM HALL,
ERPINGHAM, NORFOLK

April 28, '31.

My darling John,

I am so thankful you are coming here. I couldn't have borne to think of your going back to Nanthant just now. I won't attempt to say in a letter what I feel. You know. Dear Noll has been so sweet with Corinna. Every time he sees her he asks if she would like to go and look at his Moth, but I have forbidden any flights, so do not be anxious. And my beloved Simon came to me and said, "Mummy, if Corinna has lost Aunt Athene, I think I could find her. I found Sarah's bantam who was lost." Mairi has been angelic. So gentle and so calm. Corinna herself was terribly worried because she was not with you, and she is counting the days until you get here. Darling, all my thoughts.

Your loving loving

Prudence

And Corinna wrote:

My dear Father,

I am very unhappy that I shall never see darling Mummy again until I go to Heaven which I expect will be a very long time. Uncle Noll has got a new airoplane but Aunt Prudence says I must not fly in it. I am longing to see you because I know you are very sad.

Lots of kisses and hugs from

Your loving Corinna

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There was a letter too from his stepmother:

57 CHURCH ROW,
HAMPSTEAD, N.W.;

April 28, '31.

My dearest John,

This is just to say that I do hope you will spend a night with us on your way to Norfolk. The news about our so dearly loved Athene was a great shock to your father. You will know why, and it would be kind of you to give him a chance to express his sorrow. One is apt to forget that he is such an old man now, so young is he in many ways, and I know you'll forgive my making this little plea for him. I cabled the sad news to David in Hollywood, and he cabled back to ask for your address in New York, evidently with the idea of travelling from California to see you, but I told him you would be leaving before he could arrive. Dearest John, I can't tell you how my heart aches for you. I just can't.

*Your always loving
Elise*

The first question the lawyer asked his son when Elise had left them in the library after dinner that night was what he intended to do about Corinna.

"She will have that excellent Highland nurse who has been with her since she was a year old," said John.

"But isn't there a risk of her being spoilt by leaving her too long with a nurse? Oughtn't you to see about getting her a good governess as soon as possible?"

"If the right woman presents herself I'll consider that. But meanwhile I am looking after her education myself. I don't want to have to educate Corinna's governess as well," John replied firmly.

"You feel competent to undertake Corinna's education?" his father pressed.

"Surely a man is much more competent to educate a girl than a woman?" John asked, as if any other opinion were an extravagance of the mind.

"I don't think such a proposition would strike me as self-evident if I heard it from the lips of counsel," said the Judge. "And what

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if she goes to school? Are you sure that the kind of education you will give her will be the best preparation for that?"

"She won't go to school," said John. "I shall educate her for life not for school."

Alexander Ogilvie smoked for a while in silence. That other Athene of his own was in his memory:

"But, Athene, it would really be better for the boy to go to a boarding-school."

"No, no, dearest Alec, I dislike intensely the boarding-school system. . . . I detest all schools, to be candid, and I feel I am being weak in compromising by sending him to a day-school; but at least I can watch its daily effect upon him, and you must promise me, Alec, that if I think it is wiser to take him away you will not oppose it for reasons which have been argued over and over again. . . . While John is young, I want to be sure he has a chance of considering some of the illogical ideas that his mother entertains in her crack-brained Celtiberian head. And if she lets him go to a nice gentlemanly little preparatory school situated in a bracing position on a southerly slope of the Sussex downs, he will either come back with his noddle full of silly games or he will come back secretive and shy because his essential self has been violated by the communal self of an English preparatory school situated in that bracing position on the southerly slopes of the Sussex downs."

"Well," said the Judge pensively, "I suppose my Athene would have agreed with you. She would have been seventy next week, and she has been dead forty years. Forty years ago last February. She was not yet thirty when she died. I was younger than you are now. I was only thirty-seven. Your loss has brought my loss very near to me again."

"I think Elise divined that," said John.

"Dear kind Elise! She has never grudged me the magic that clung to your mother. The magic, the magic," the old man murmured to himself.

Yes, Elise was right. One was apt to forget how old he was.

"Have you ever thought about retiring from the Bench?" John asked.

"Retiring?" the Judge echoed sharply. "Why should I think about retiring? I hope you don't imagine my concern for you is a sign of physical weakness or mental instability. It would have shown a gross lack of sensitiveness if I had not drawn upon my own

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experience of grief to express my sympathy for you."

"My dear father, please don't take my rather tactless question as anything more than curiosity."

"It was inevitable that I should compare my position, left a widower with an only child, with yours. And it was equally inevitable that I should wonder if you were not feeling a little overcome by the responsibility."

"I think a daughter is a much easier problem in such circumstances than a son."

"Which suggests that you don't think I was very adequate over the problem of yourself," Sir Alexander commented a little wryly.

"I was probably a very perverse creature," John responded quickly, "for Corinna is not at all perverse. I may be deceiving myself by taking so calm a view of her educational future. Ten years hence I may be confiding in you that the young people of to-day are beyond me."

"There's a happy mean between asking me to retire from the Bench at seventy-seven and expecting to find me still on it at eighty-seven," the Judge said, shaking his head with an ironical smile. "But I wasn't questioning your ability to keep pace with the young people of to-day. I was thinking of the difficulty any man, whatever his age and whatever his point of view, would naturally encounter in assuming complete responsibility for the whole of his daughter's education."

"Ah, well, I shall always be able to call on Prudence to help," said John.

"Yes, of course, Prudence is now married, with a family of three already. I had gone back so completely into the past that I return with almost a shock to the realization that I have a daughter who is a mother. Will you get rid of the place in Cornwall now that you have built the house on this island which I have postponed visiting for so long that I fear I shall never see it now?"

"I haven't made up my mind about Nanphant," John replied. "I shall see first how the experiment of living in Tigh nan Ròn looks like working."

"That means the house of the seals you told me, didn't you? Won't it be rather bleak there in winter?"

"It will be stormy. In fact very stormy. A good deal depends on political developments in Scotland. If things begin to move

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there I shan't want to be too much isolated."

"Well, I must annoy you by saying that if you are depending on any political developments in Scotland in the direction you favour I think you'll be able to indulge in isolation for a long while to come. I think nobody is in a mood to make trouble. We have had a difficult twelve years since the Peace and I think that all parties and classes are beginning to appreciate the need to go slow for a while."

"In other words, to drift?" John suggested. "That's a good slow process till you reach the weir. Then the pace quickens disastrously."

"Well, well, we mustn't argue about that to-night," said the Judge. "I appreciated your putting in a night here on your way to Norfolk. I did want you to understand how deeply I have felt for you. You do know, I think, how much your Athene meant to me. I was a little nervous at first when I heard you were going to marry an American woman, but from the first I admired her, and I grew very fond of her. She was so modest. Her modesty was most endearing. I remember she wrote me a beautiful letter when I gave her your mother's travelling-clock. I should like you to give that clock to Corinna now, John, with my blessing on every hour it chimes for her. Yes, I think your dear mother would have encouraged this scheme of yours to educate your daughter. You have so much of her in you."

"I have quite a lot of you, you know," said John. "Quite enough to know how much you're wanting to say to me and how difficult it is to say it."

"Yes, well, I expect you're feeling tired. You'll be wanting to go to bed," said the Judge, and in an embarrassed affection the two men shook hands.

Next morning John walked along to Claremount Gardens to see Miriam Stern before he left London. He had telephoned to say he was on the way and it was she who opened the door to him. As he followed her upstairs he noticed that she moved more slowly than she was wont and for the first time he realized that she was growing old. In the May sunlight that poured into that room of hers he saw that she, like the orange damask curtains, was fading;

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but the Steinway Grand was still as black and lustrous as ever, and her eyes were still as bright.

"I was just going to write to you, John, when you rang me up. Look." She pointed to the blank sheet of notepaper on her desk. "There was so much and yet so little I could have said. I was going to send you a letter I had from Leonora this morning. Read it, John."

The letter had been sent from Santa Barbara by air-mail across the States and must have crossed the Atlantic with himself.

Miriam dearest, I met David Ogilvie in Los Angeles yesterday and have just heard from him that Athene is dead.

It is incredible. Only last month I had a sweet letter from her to say that if Arthur could be persuaded to leave his stage siren they might come and spend the Easter vacation with us and I was just going to write and reproach her with her failure to get the better of the siren when I heard this terrible news. David Ogilvie says that John was on his way over when she died, but that he thinks he arrived in time to see her buried. I cabled to John in New York, but have had no answer. However, David was sure he intended to leave New York immediately after the funeral. I expect John will have cabled to you. He probably didn't cable to us just because he didn't want to have anybody around him. I can understand that. I wish Julius and Sebastian weren't away on this musical exploration of Hawaii. They won't be back home for another three weeks and I long to talk to Julius about John and Athene. They have both meant so much in my life.

I look back to that summer in Citrano just before the war, which I have always counted as our real honeymoon even though Julius and I were married in the January before. I remember that evening when we heard the news of the assassination of the Archduke at Sarajevo and John saying all the way back over the calm sea to Citrano that this meant war. Dear Athene was so fluttered because she'd been away from her small son for a couple of nights and began to wonder if anything had happened to him, and Wacey Langridge and Geoffrey Noel and Julius thought John was being a scaremonger. But he was right. And now Wacey and Athene are both dead. And those lovely times at

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Citrano after the war, and Monica and Corinna as babies and Sebastian outraging poor Arthur by his failure to recognize that Arthur's seniority entitled him to more respect. And now I am forty and I don't feel one little bit as if I was forty, and dear Athene was only forty-two and she must have felt just as young as I feel and she's dead. It was a perfect marriage—as perfect as mine, and now it is finished. It's so terrible that John was too late to say a last good-bye. I shiver at the thought of being ill while Julius is away over the Pacific and dying before he can reach me. Oh, it's just being morbid, but my heart bleeds for John and Athene, and, as we humans always do, I begin to make a drama round myself.

You'll surely see dear John before I do. You'll tell him, won't you, how much I grieve for him? It's tragic to think that when we come to Europe as we plan to do next year to escape the ballyhoo of the Presidential election there will be no Athene. And I feel so sad for poor Arthur who will be thinking that it was his fault through getting all tangled up with this theatrical girl.

I wonder what lies before Julius and me in the future in the way of domestic problems. Sebastian is sixteen now. We were thinking at one time as you know of letting him go to study in Leipzig, but Julius doesn't like the way things are going in Germany. He thinks this queer creature Hitler will get power presently, and that if he does the strangest things may happen. He says too that Germany is no longer the heart of music, and that it would handicap Sebastian's future to send him there now. So I don't know what Julius will finally decide for Sebastian. I think, though, that he is turning his eyes more and more to Europe. One reason for this is that my father has been hit by the depression and I'm afraid the orchestra will have to be disbanded. He's very far from being ruined, but still he can't run to orchestras at present. Monica is still very happy at her school. I wonder if John will send Corinna to a convent-school. It would be nice if she and Monica went to the same one, should Julius decide to stay in Europe for some time. Veronica gets more and more exactly like myself—I think in character as well as looks, and Wolfgang doesn't yet show any signs of living up to the name Julius inflicted upon him. David Ogilvie said there was only one background outside music which could stand up to a name like

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Wolfgang Stern and that was the movies. David himself is soon to return to England where he has visions of rescuing British films from the shabby mediocrity in which they seem sunk. David's words, not mine.

Julius was very severe on the decision of Emil and Astrid to send Yan and Erika to one of those schools where children are allowed to do as they like. I reminded him of his having been allowed to live by himself in his own house at the age of fifteen, but he refuses to admit any parallel. I should like news of your elder son's family when next you write. And I'll hope to hear you're feeling less tired when you do write. I don't know what you mean by calling yourself an old woman when you're still two years away from seventy. I don't intend to admit to being an old woman till I'm eighty.

And as I write that I think again of Athene. I just cannot believe I shall never hear again in this world that warm Southern voice of hers. I will write to John with this mail and send the letter to Cornwall. But what can I say to him? To you I can say how much she is linked up with happiness in my own past, but to John that would sound like shallow egotism.

The children send grandmother kisses and a great deal of love and wish she wasn't so prejudiced against poor old America as never to visit us here.

So much love, Miriam dearest,

from your

Leonora

"It will be good if they decide to live in Europe," said John when he had finished the letter. "Leonora has great warmth. How infallibly Julius chose for himself. He was a wise young man. Few men can have made so few mistakes with their lives as he."

"He is not satisfied with what he has achieved in music."

"You wouldn't expect him to be."

"I'm not sure that I'm satisfied myself, John. I think he has remained stationary for the last ten years."

"He's not another Beethoven," John agreed. "But when shall we hear another Beethoven? The capacity for creative art is gradually departing from humanity."

"You really think so?"

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"I am more and more convinced of it. Man is only beginning now to discover how completely indigestible the forbidden fruit was. Do you think Emil and Astrid will get their children back into Eden by this ridiculous fad of education in which they are indulging themselves? I have no patience with such credulity."

"And what plans have you for Corinna?"

"I shall educate her myself."

"On any system?"

"Yes, on a very rigid system."

"This sounds alarming for your poor daughter."

"I wasn't using rigid in the sense of severe. It is the pattern which will be rigid. My objection to education as we now understand it is that it imposes on the child information of which its experience of life is insufficient to take mental advantage. Education *should* draw out of the child all that is there at the moment. What our education does is to enamel the mind with a meretricious appearance of knowledge which cracks and peels off on contact with independent existence and leaves the subject unprotected against experience and therefore at the mercy of the immense aggregate of human stupidity. Just as the human being before birth passes in the womb through the evolutionary stages that preceded its humanity so after birth the human being passes through the stages of human history. Except in exceptional cases the Australian aborigine is incapable of developing beyond the mental state of neolithic man. The civilized western child passes out of that stage by the time it is five years old. Thence onward for a year or two it lives mentally in the bronze age until with an ever-increasing velocity it begins to show forth the later development of western man. In its early 'teens it is still partially barbaric, but now in the present state of western evolution it reaches at puberty the renaissance. In fact roughly we can accord to the years of the growing child after ten the centuries between to-day and the first millennium.

"Corinna has already had a grounding in Latin and Greek with some conversational French, Italian, and Gaelic in various degrees of fluency, and I have let her read as her fancy dictated. But the other day she started to read *Don Juan* . . ."

"*Don Juan!*" Miriam Stern exclaimed.

"Yes, and I realized I had to put her education in order. I don't want to forbid her books on the ground that she wouldn't

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understand them, but by my system of education I shall be able to order her reading as part of it and demand from her cooperation. So when we are settled on the island this autumn I shall produce for her my rigid system. When she is eleven she will live in the twelfth century, at twelve in the thirteenth, and so on until by the time she is nineteen she will be fit to grasp the significance of contemporary history. And she will not learn merely Scottish history and most certainly not merely English history. She will learn European history. Moreover, her artistic education will not move beyond the century she has reached. I have already taught her a good deal about ancient history and encouraged her to be interested in mythology, Greek and Celtic and Norse particularly. She will not be at the mercy of twelfth-century pictorial art while she is eleven. She will have ancient art to occupy her eyes, and for music she will have folk-songs and Gregorian chants. I won't elaborate any further now. You understand what I'm aiming at?"

"It may be a difficult system to carry through with perfect consistency, John."

"That goes without saying, but at worst it cannot possibly be as inconsistent as the vile hotch-potch of information by which children are stifled under our usual educational methods. You'll admit that? One advantage of my system is that as she grows older the centuries will provide her with more and more. When she's sixteen she'll be getting Bach and at seventeen Mozart and Haydn and early Beethoven. When she's fourteen she'll be getting Botticelli, and when she's fifteen Leonardo and Michelangelo. And she shall see Greece and Italy and Spain and France at the right moment and in the right way."

"And what about such prosaic things as mathematics and the natural sciences?" Miriam Stern asked.

"If she can add and multiply and divide and subtract, that will be all the mathematics she will need, unless some hidden talent for mathematics comes to light, and that isn't likely. Science she can study at her own leisure when she is her own mistress. She will know how to recognize the stars in the sky, the flowers and the birds and the insects, and she will be able to study natural history as much as she wants. Of course she'll continue with her languages."

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"And all this on your Hebridean island?" Miriam Stern asked with a smile.

"Oh, I'm not proposing to keep her shut up like another Miranda," said John. "I told you that we shall travel."

"Did dear Athene think your plan for Corinna's education was a good one?"

"She was a little sceptical about it, but she left the responsibility for Corinna to me. She had to consider Arthur. She was determined to do everything for him that she could, but in her last letter to me she said she was coming back because Arthur had promised not to do anything foolish for a year. It is tragic that Corinna will miss Athene's example, but I shall try to preserve for her that example and the feeling that her mother is still with her. She shall not forget her."

"But won't your preoccupation with Corinna interfere with your political plans, John?"

"I shan't do so much public speaking, but that may be all to the good. Scotland cannot be talked back to life if the will to live has been irremediably sapped. But there may be other ways . . ." He broke off.

"Other ways?" Miriam Stern asked quickly. "You're not thinking of violence?"

"I'd rather not talk about it, my dear. It requires meditation and prayer and the searching of one's own soul. What is to be remains dark at present."

"And Cornwall is something in the past already?"

"It has been receding for some time," John replied. "It was rather a grief to Athene, and now she is not here to grieve."

"Are you reproaching yourself?"

"Why do *you* ask that, Miriam? It was you who once taught me not to reproach myself for the inevitable."

In the light May sunlight her faded cheeks flushed very faintly, and she put long white fingers to her neck.

"And even then I seemed so old," she whispered.

"You mustn't think that Athene and I were growing apart because I was growing away from one phase of our life together. This new life would have been an experiment, but I have no doubt that Athene would have learnt to understand the emotion beneath. She was already beginning to understand. It is tragic that death should

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cut through that understanding before it was complete."

"If indeed you are thinking of violence, John, I am glad that death did come to her, for Athene would never have understood that, and I, though I understand violence, abhor it," Mi iam declared. "Strange creature that you are! You draw for me the pattern of a child's upbringing, a loving intricate pattern which will demand of you infinite patience in the application of it to a young life, and then almost in the same breath you hint that you are contemplating the possibility of destroying life."

"It is not an immediate problem. I am not contemplating such a possibility at the moment. Well, I must go now and catch my train. I shall be pestering you fairly soon to visit me on the island."

"I will come, dear John, without pestering," she promised.

It was Noll Erpingham who met John at the country station which seemed after the inferno of Liverpool Street like a miraculous minute paradise.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry about this," said his host, stroking his small blond moustache and looking earnestly round at John before he started the car.

"I know you are, Noll. It's good of you and Prudence to have Corinna and me with you at this time."

The car suddenly leapt forward as if it were an expression of its owner's embarrassed disclaimer:

"My dear chap, don't be absurd. Prue was only too thankful you wanted to come to us. I mean to say—what?"

"I hope I'm not interrupting your duties as an hereditary legislator?" John asked.

"Oh, I don't spend much time in the House," the young peer told him. "I mean to say, there's no point in wasting time over questions I know nothing about. I shan't vote on this Land Utilization Bill which for a wonder treats agriculture with moderate decency. And by Jove, that's something for a Labour Government. What I'm most keen about is getting this country air-minded. All it is at present, as far as I can make out, is hot-air-minded, what?"

"It's certainly that," John agreed.

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"I mean to say, take this airship business," Noll went on. "Awful thing of course losing all those lives in the R101 last October, but it was really the best thing that could have happened if it teaches our people that airships are not worth bothering about. I was horrified by the Air Estimates last March. I don't know what this confounded Labour Government think they're doing. It's all very fine for the Under-Secretary for Air to say that a major war is a remote possibility, but if it is a possibility at all, however remote, we can't afford to jeopardize our future by not taking air power seriously. The trouble is that these soldiers and sailors don't really believe it is important, and any chance there ever was of their thinking it important vanished when the R.A.F. was created as an independent branch of the fighting services. I wish I'd been old enough to get into the last war. One more year, and I might have been in the R.A.F."

They drove on in silence for a minute or two through a tranquil level pastureland watered by a slow willow-fringed stream, a countryside wherein, if an international crisis was in full fever, war major or minor would still have seemed a most remote possibility.

"Have you heard from David lately?" Noll asked presently. "The blighter never writes to either of us."

"His mother tells me he will be back in England fairly soon entrusted with the job of doing for British films what you want to do for British air power."

"You know, I never thought David would make a success of the films," said Noll. "I thought his keenness was the backwash of that affair he had in Rigden's yacht with that girl Janet Meriday."

"That wasn't a serious affair."

"It was serious enough to launch him on a profession nobody would ever have thought of for a fellow like David," said Noll.

"I was much relieved when he did find something he really wanted to do. I remember shocking him once by suggesting he should become a gamekeeper. I told him I thought he would make a much better job of that than of being called to the Bar without the slightest enthusiasm for it merely because it was the obvious thing for him to do. Yes, I'm bound to say I feel grateful to Miss Janet Meriday."

"Well, I shall be glad to see the lad again. That was a grand

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trip we had in Rigden's yacht. Marvellous sport with those moufflon on Antimilos. And I fell in love with Prue then. I haven't heard of Rigden for a long time. How's he getting along?"

"The poor old boy was very badly hit by the slump. He's living in a small villa in Woodford now."

"Good God," Noll ejaculated. "That place in the suburbs, eh?"

The car reached the gates of the park in which Erpingham Hall with its home farm had been drowsing since Queen Elizabeth sat upon the throne. The gates were opened by a small girl in a checkered pinafore.

"How's your grandfather to-day, Edith?"

"He's better, thank you, my lord," she murmured bashfully.

"That's good. Tell him I'm coming along to-morrow to have a crack with him."

"Yes, my lord. Thank you."

"Old John Barlow, my lodgekeeper, is down with lumbago. That's my bailiff's daughter, who's looking after the old man and attending to the gates," Noll explained as he drove on. Half a mile farther along he pulled up beside a wide empty space of level turf beyond which was a hangar.

"I say, would you like to have a look at my new Moth, John? She's a little beauty." Then he took the brake off the car and put it on himself. "But of course you won't want to be looking at a plane just now. We'll see it some other time. Corinna was very much taken with it, but Prue wouldn't let me give her a flip."

"I'm delighted to hear it," said John.

The enthusiast sighed.

"This country certainly isn't air-minded. You're typical, John."

"I don't see any point in running unnecessary risks."

"But there's no more risk in taking Corinna up in my Moth than in my driving you from Gaythorpe in my Morris."

"Is this car a Morris?"

"What did you think it was?"

"I'd no idea."

Noll Erpingham shook his head.

"You know, John, you'd have been more at home in Erpingham when it was first built."

The drive swept round an ilex-grove to run between an avenue

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of oaks at the head of which stood the red-brick pile of Erpingham Hall mellowed by the sun and wind, the frosts and rains, of three and a half centuries.

"I was going to make my landing-ground here," said Noll when they were half-way along the avenue, "but my mother threw a fit about it."

"You tell me that every time I visit Erpingham," John reminded him. "And your thwarted vandalism is nothing to be proud of."

"But what's the use of being sentimental about a few trees, John? I'll probably have to cut them down anyway in a few years to pay my grocer's bill. I tell you, I'm not bringing up Simon to suppose he's going to inherit all this and be able to live like a lord. It'll last out my time, perhaps; but it won't last much longer."

But as John crossed the threshold and the peace of the old house was upon him, it was seeming a morbid fancy that such peace would not endure for ever.

"John, darling John, I simply couldn't come to Gaythorpe to meet you because I was afraid of bursting into tears when I saw you," cried Prudence when she caught him in her arms. "Noll, the children are in the yew-parlour. Be an angel and bring Corinna to my room. I thought you'd like to see her alone first, John," she said when her husband went off to the garden.

They walked along to Prudence's room, the mullioned windows of which looked out on a small Dutch garden with box-edged paths of brick that seemed pointed with moss instead of mortar, the beds of which were flaming with orange and yellow cottage tulips. The air of the room was faintly perfumed by pot-pourri as if the flowers of the chintz curtains and covers enjoyed a ghostly life of their own reflected from the glowing garden beyond the lattices.

"You never told about Mario Aprili, did you?" John said to his sister.

"No, John, but how do you know that?"

"It occurred to me when he was talking about Rigden's yacht just now. You were right. The image of Mario Aprili would be out of place in this room. I suppose a dozen ladies of Erpingham have inherited this room one from another since the time of farthingales," John went on reflectively. "And Noll seems more convinced than ever that you will be the last of them."

"Oh, he's beginning to revel in it now. And it does make my

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poor mother-in-law so furious. However, she is already planning to marry Simon to a nice rich Roman Catholic American girl."

"She's not worried by having three little Popish grandchildren?"

"Well, of course she'd rather have three nice little Anglicans, but she's so good and kind, John. And Father Battye, our new priest at Littleford, is a great tree-lover. So now she feels we are all in a grand alliance with her to discourage Noll's passion for cutting them down."

"But isn't she afraid Father Battye may graft the Golden Rose of Popery on the sturdy Protestant briar?"

"No, I don't think so. She trusts to Noll's good manners. And indeed rightly, for the old pet's manners are perfect." Suddenly Prudence's eyes brimmed. "Oh, John, why did you speak of Mario Aprili?"

"Is that still a heartache? Surely not?" he asked anxiously.

"No, but I was remembering the sound of Athene's voice when she came up on the roof of the Torre Saracena after you'd told me about Mario and how she said she would have come long ago but she had thought I would rather stay quietly with you for a while. 'Honey sweet', she called me. I've never forgotten. But I hear Noll and Corinna. We shall be out in the yew-parlour, and then we're going to have nursery-tea."

A moment or two later John and Corinna were alone together. "It is horrid that Mummy isn't here too," she sighed at last after they had talked a while about Athene in that quiet room faintly perfumed with potpourri.

"Yes, it is *very* horrid," her father agreed.

"Do you think if she was here she would let me fly with Uncle Noll in his Moth?"

"I'm quite sure she wouldn't," he declared.

"I thought perhaps she would," Corinna murmured with a deeper sigh. "I didn't think *you* would, because you're awfully like Aunt Prudence. But I did think Mummy would."

"I don't know why you think that. She was always very nervous about you."

"She was sometimes when you were driving me in the car. But flying isn't a bit dangerous. The sky's so lovely and empty. Simon said if he was ten he'd be able to fly."

"I don't think Simon's in a position at the age of four to say

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what he'll be able to do when he's ten. It will depend on his mother."

"Sarah said she would fly when she was ten."

"And I suppose Jeremy's going to fly when he's ten also?"

"Father, don't be silly. Jeremy's only two."

"He's just as much qualified as Sarah and Simon to announce his plans for the future."

"I think flying's lovely," said Corinna dreamily.

"So do I from the ground."

She looked at her father with compassion.

"When I'm grown up I'll learn to fly myself," she proclaimed.

"I *am* glad you've come back from America, Father, but I *do* wish you were air-minded."

"I suppose you got that word from your Uncle Noll?"

"Well, I asked him just now if he thought you'd let me fly with him, and he said he didn't think you would, because you weren't air-minded."

"I think we ought to go along and join the others," John decided. "I hear we're going to have nursery-tea. I like nursery-tea."

"Well, I like it at home," Corinna said, "but Nannie cuts such frightful chunks of bread and butter here."

They left the tranquil room and its faint perfume of potpourri to walk along through the tranquil house toward the great lawn at the back which, bordered by a brick wall on either side bloomed like a plum by age, looked out over the water-meadows of the sleepy Wamble. In the middle of the lawn was a rectangular enclosure made by a thick hedge of yew about eight feet high, one side of which had four trim entrances so as not to deprive those who sat in this yew-parlour of the gentle view. Here, sheltered from every wind except the south, one could live in as green a world as daffodils, and here the Erpingham family was waiting for John and Corinna. Sarah and Simon were tongue-tied for a moment with shyness; but Jeremy tactfully fell over a cushion as rosy-red as his own cheeks, and that gave the other three children an excuse to laugh so heartily that shyness vanished.

"How right we were to come here," John said to his sister when after tea they were walking together up and down the wide walk in the centre of the kitchen-garden between borders of blue and

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white, shell-pink and golden columbines. Then he told her of his plans for Corinna's education.

"Oh, John, why was I handed over to Miss Peachey? And why can't I be ten years old again?" she exclaimed.

"You're a very encouraging audience for a crank," he told her.

"No, I'm not just being tactful. I really do think it's a splendid scheme," she insisted. "Of course, it wouldn't work unless you had the whole say . . ." She stopped abruptly. "I mean it would not be possible except with an only child, would it?"

"You think Athene would have had her doubts?"

"No, no, that isn't what I meant. Did you tell Mother anything about it?"

"I told the Judge. He had his doubts of my ability to carry the experiment through, so I don't think you need waste emotion in wishing you were ten years old again. You would never be entrusted to me. The Judge was worried about the peculiar problems of girlhood, but I relieved his anxiety by reminding him that his daughter was a young matron with three children of her own and capable of coming to my rescue if when the moment arrived I should suddenly recede into Victorianism and hide my blushes under a crinoline as the Spanish Ambassador hid his under Elizabeth's farthingale."

"John, he didn't!"

"I think it was the Spanish Ambassador."

"Where did you get such an outrageous story?"

"I don't remember exactly, but it was an authentic piece of contemporary gossip."

"I don't believe a word of it."

"I can believe anything of Elizabeth. Have you ever read a life of her that was not written by a British Empire booster?"

"I hope when Corinna is fifteen and living in the time of the Tudors you won't tell her tales like that?"

"I certainly shall if I'm satisfied that they're true. But to come back to what I was saying—the Judge's concern for my embarrassment and Corinna's modesty was relieved by the thought of you in the background as a kind of female Aristotle."

"Well, I was always much more at ease with *you* in talking about that kind of thing than I ever was with Mother. I've never forgotten that winter day we walked beside that calm sea in Cornwall,

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and I asked you a pretty intimate question, and you answered me perfectly. Besides, you're going to keep Mairi. She will be quite helpful when the moment comes?"

"When did the moment come with you?"

"I was very nearly fifteen. But you couldn't go by that."

"Athene was nearly fifteen too," John said.

"Nor by that," his sister added.

"Well, there's nothing to worry about for the present. By the way, don't talk about my educational plans to Noll. He disapproves of the lack of air in my mind already. I don't want him to think it's full of liquid gas."

"Of course I shouldn't tell Noll."

"You don't tell him everything?" John asked, looking at her quickly.

"Why, no, he wouldn't understand. Besides, I don't love him in that kind of way."

"I'm not sure that *I'm* understanding now."

Prudence hesitated.

"Well, it's a very successful partnership, John, but it's not a complete fusion. He's always he and I'm always I. You asked me if I ever told him about Mario. He wouldn't understand that. Oh yes, he'd understand that I could fall in love with an attractive young Italian, but he couldn't understand what was for me an ecstasy. He couldn't understand any more than I could understand the working of his plane. He couldn't fly with me in imagination any more than I could fly with him in the Moth. We could both *be* flown, but we should both of us feel dizzy and apprehensive in our different ways. He longs for me to want to fly with him, but he doesn't love me any less because I won't fly. And I would love him to be somebody who could fly with *me*, but I don't love *him* any less because we can't. If I told him that I have discussed with you that particular problem of Corinna's education he'd feel embarrassed for both of us and in himself he would feel rather shocked. I think a partnership probably makes a much better marriage in the long run than a fusion, because partners can always adjust themselves whereas if one were fused with another there is no longer any question of adjustment, and if anything does go wrong it goes completely wrong for both simultaneously. Even children can break up that kind of marriage whereas in a partnership children

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are always adjusting it. I'm expressing myself badly, but I'm sure you understand what I'm driving at."

"Yes, and I think you're right," John said.

"I know I am, John," she said earnestly.

For the rest of that May life at Erpingham moved as placidly as the Wamble among its water-meadows and willows. At the end of the month news came from the builders of Tigh nan Ròr that all would be ready for the furniture by the end of June. So with Corinna and Mairi Macdonald John went down to arrange for the move from Nanphant.

"I know we shouldn't see as much of you as before," Henry Pendarves said to him. "But I hadn't expected you would desert us entirely."

"If Athene had lived I should have held on to Nanphant, but now that she is gone I don't feel there is any justification for keeping one foot in England," he replied.

"Cornwall isn't England," his kinsman barked.

"That's true, Henry; but it counts in Scotland as England just as Scotland itself at present counts in Europe and America as England. If I were a full-blooded Cornishman I would not desert what still endures here of what was Cornwall. I would be like you and die in the last spiritual ditch, but I believe that there is still a chance for Scotland to assert her sovereignty and recover her full status as a European nation, and I do not believe that as much is possible for Cornwall. So I shall follow the Scottish half of me."

"Are you going in for this Sinn Fein business up there?"

"I'm not committed to any positive move at the present moment except my own move to Scotland. If I shall one day find that I have dreamed an idle dream, I may come back to Cornwall and rest in peace."

"Then why sell Nanphant?"

"Because I should certainly never return there. That already belongs to what has been in my life. It is rich with memories of happiness which I do not propose to spoil by burying them beneath disillusioning experience. Some other house shall contend with that if disillusionment is future's gift to my future. Indeed, I

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doubt if I shall really return to Cornwall at all. If the Sasunnach is to win I shall be tempted to make my surrender complete by retiring to East Anglia. I'm inclined to think that East Anglia is now the most authentic England left."

"I can't say I think that's a great recommendation," Henry Pendarves grunted.

"Not to you, Henry. You can't afford to admit anything in England's favour because you have nothing left except your spiritual independence. I remember when you told us you had married a foreigner and the surprise I had when I realized that Ethel's foreign blood was Devonian. But I can afford to love England in all that is most English because the fight is not for spiritual independence but for material independence as well. And who would not love England and the English once one had convinced them that, however ridiculous it might seem to them, there were quite a few nations that did not want to be English?"

"I wouldn't love them," Henry Pendarves snapped.

"No, because if you told an Englishman that you weren't English he wouldn't believe you, and naturally anybody who feels as strong an objection as you do to being English must stress all the while the difference between you by insisting upon what you dislike in England. You even extend your disapproval to include English scenery."

"Well, I shall miss you, John. I wish you weren't leaving the Meneage."

When the packing was done at Nanphant Corinna was sent with Mairi to Hampstead, and John went to Ampleside before leaving for the North. He wanted to talk to the headmaster about Padraig's future. A letter he had received from him after his last visit to Ireland with Ellen Fitzgerald during the Easter holidays had worried him whether he was fulfilling Fitz's trust.

Dom Maurus Ilderton, O.S.B., was a tall man with a great beak of a nose and a tight-set mouth whose stern appearance was softened when he wished to soften it by the kindness of his eyes. When these hardened he was formidable indeed.

"I've no complaints to make of Padraig, Mr Ogilvie," he said when John enquired after the boy's scholastic progress. "He's reasonably industrious and I think he has enough brains to win a University scholarship. I'm not prophesying, but I shall be dis-

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appointed if he doesn't pull something off either at Oxford or Cambridge."

"That's what I want to talk about," said John.

"I repeat I'm not prophesying. He's not quite fifteen yet. It's too early to tell."

"Oh, I'm not worrying whether he will get a scholarship," said John. "The question I'm considering is whether he ought to go to any English University."

"Well, I suppose he might go to Trinity College, though I understand the Irish hierarchy frown upon it."

"I think his father would have frowned upon it too. I feel positive his father would have sent him to the National University in Dublin."

Dom Maurus raised his eyebrows.

"Then why have sent him to Ampleside?" he asked. "It wasn't fair to the boy to give him an Ampleside education if his whole future lies in Ireland."

"That's exactly what I'm beginning to realize," said John. "But his grandmother and his aunt were so anxious." He broke off to tell Dom Maurus the story of Fitz, and stress what his own decision to make his submission to the Church owed to his dead friend.

"And what about Padraig himself?" the monk asked.

"That is what has brought me here. The boy has conceived a prejudice against his native country. He was over there during the Easter holidays and wrote to say he hoped he wouldn't have to go over there again for a long time. The letter reached me at a sad time when I had just lost my wife and I have delayed answering it. I thought perhaps you could help me to make up my mind what line to take with him."

"What you mean is whether you ought to remove him from Ampleside now?" Dom Maurus asked.

"Well, yes, of course that is the problem. It would be more easily solved if Padraig had any near relations in Ireland. Except, however, for his aunt, who is completely Anglicized, he is alone. He has a very small property in a tumbledown condition in Kerry, but he was taken away from there just before his father was killed, and both his grandmother and his aunt impressed upon him in early childhood the folly and wickedness of revenge."

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"I should hope so," said the monk. "You surely don't expect the monks of Ampleside to kindle in him the passion for revenge?"

"Certainly not. But it is not necessary for him to cherish revenge in order to become a good Irishman, and I feel I owe it to his father to do all I can. In his last letter to me in June 1922 which I have here he wrote:

I am worried about my mother and Padraig. It goes against the grain to say this, but perhaps my mother might be happier to come to England till the troubles are over. And that will mean she'll want to have Padraig with her. Well, that's all right, but I charge you, John, to see that he keeps up with his Irish and that you'll stand out against Ellen's trying to send him to an English public school or any such idea. I've left a letter to be opened in case I'm killed, and in that I've left it as my last request that your advice is always to be heeded."

"And in the end you did advise an English public school," said Dom Maurus.

"I thought of Ampleside more as a Catholic public school. I don't think I realized quite how English it was."

"Will it be fair on the boy if you take him away now and send him, say, to one of the Christian Brothers' schools in Ireland?" the monk asked.

"I think it would be a great unhappiness at first, but isn't that what I ought to do now that he is developing this prejudice against his own country which I had not foreseen as a result of an Ampleside education?"

"Is that a rebuke to our narrowness here, Mr Ogilvie?" the monk asked, with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, no, it's a rebuke to my own conventionality. The fact is I think I just wanted him to have the best education he could be given."

"I'm afraid I shall have to say that this is a matter upon which you must make up your own mind," said Dom Maurus. "I can express my personal opinion that you won't make Padraig a better Irishman by taking him away from Ampleside, but that personal opinion is of no value. I repeat it is something which only you can decide."

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"Do you think taking him away from here might have a bad effect on his development?" John asked.

"Again I should have no right to commit myself to such an opinion, Mr Ogilvie. The boy is getting on well. That is all I can say."

After what John told himself a little petulantly was an extremely unhelpful interview, he and Padraig went for a walk that afternoon beside the great Midland river that flowed through flat fields where the buttercups were drowning in the lush grass.

"You must have enjoyed Caragh better than this," John said to him.

"I'd have liked Caragh if I'd had a boat I could sail," Padraig replied.

"If I give you a boat, would you enjoy living at Tinoran with your Aunt Ellen?"

"I don't think Aunt Ellen would like to live there. She said the whole place was haunted."

"Well, leave your Aunt Ellen out of it. Would *you* like to live at Tinoran?"

"If I lived there I'd have to spend all the holidays there, wouldn't I?" Padraig enquired cautiously.

"I was wondering if you'd like to leave Ampleside?"

"Leave Ampleside?" the boy exclaimed. "But I won't be fifteen until July."

"I don't mean leave school altogether. I meant leave Ampleside and go to school in Ireland?"

Padraig stopped dead.

"You're not serious? You asked me in the Christmas holidays whether I'd like to go to school in Ireland, and I told you then that I wouldn't. But I didn't think you really meant it. I thought you were ragging me."

There was a tremor in the boy's voice which revealed his agitation, and when John said nothing he went babbling on:

"Did Father Maurus tell you I was slacking? I really have swotted quite hard over my Irish. Did you talk to Father Columba? He said I'd done pretty well since Easter. Of course that doesn't count for much with Father Maurus unless your classics are absolutely marvellous. Where would I go if I went to school in Ireland?"

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"We'll talk about it when you come up to the island in the summer holidays," said John. "Don't worry about Father Maurus. He said you were getting on well. But why have you got this prejudice against your own country? You haven't a drop of English blood in your veins."

"Well, they talk such a lot of rot about England in Ireland," said Padraig.

"Less rot than they talk about Ireland in England," John insisted. "However, we'll say no more about leaving Ampleside at present. I do want you to realize though, Padraig, that I must do what I believe your father would wish me to do about your education, and if I decide that it is my duty to fix you up in a good Irish school you must . . ."

"I must what?" Padraig asked, for the sentence had been left incomplete.

"You must make the best of it," said John lamely.

And on his way back to London in the train he felt he had been wretchedly feeble both with the headmaster and Padraig.

"I wish I could be a fanatic," he muttered to himself in exasperation.

"I didn't catch what you said, I'm afraid," said a man with a bosky moustache in the corner at the other end of the compartment, the only other occupant.

"I'm so sorry," said John. "I'm afraid I was thinking aloud."

"I've no desire to be intrusive, sir," said the stranger, "but may I enquire then what you were thinking, that is if it is not a private matter?"

"I'll tell you with pleasure," said John. "I was thinking what a wonderful people the English were and how hopeless it was for any other nation to suppose they could ever get the better of them."

To John's surprise the determined enquirer moved along the seat, and when he was opposite leaned over and offered him a beefsteak of a hand to shake.

"Dare I hope?" he said, "that you have found out the secret?"

"The secret of what?" John asked.

"Of the greatness of England."

"I think there is a variety of reasons," John replied.

The man with the bosky moustache shook his head.

"There is only one reason," he proclaimed solemnly. "You

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will find it in the twelfth chapter of Genesis the second verse:
And I will make thy name great."

"I'm sorry, but I don't quite follow you."

"I had dared to hope that you were one of us," said the man with the bosky moustache, combing it with his fingers.

"And who are you?" John asked politely.

"British Israel," the stranger declared with such emphasis that his moustache seemed animate like a wind-blown spinney. "Are you unacquainted with British Israel Truth?"

"I'm afraid I am."

The stranger put his finger in a waistcoat-pocket and took out a card, which he offered to John.

"Pullrose is my name. Gilbert Pullrose."

"I'm sorry, but I haven't a card with me," John said as he put the stranger's in his pocket. "My name is John Ogilvie."

"It is more satisfactory to know whom one is addressing when one addresses a stranger on a serious topic," said Mr Pullrose. "Has it ever occurred to you, Mr Ogilvie, to ask yourself what became of the Ten Tribes of the House of Israel?"

"Never," said John firmly.

"Look at that now. Well, you know they were taken captive to Assyria in 721 B.C. and they've never been heard of since—apparently. Mark that word 'apparently'. Judah and Benjamin were taken captive to Babylon nearly a century and a half later and a lot of them did come back. Their descendants are what we call Jews. But what became of the House of Israel? They went west and were lost under a new name just as Isaiah and Hosea prophesied they would be. Do you mean to say it's never occurred to you that the new name was British?" Mr Pullrose exclaimed.

"I see no historical or ethnological reason whatever for supposing anything of the kind," John maintained.

"Never mind what they *call* history and what they *call* ethnology. Do you put up such history and ethnology above the Holy Bible?"

"I look at the Bible in relation to both," John replied.

"That's just the mistake you make. You oughtn't to look at the Bible in relation to anything at all. Except God, of course. That goes without saying. God didn't give us *the* Book like one volume out of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It's all there, Mr Ogilvie. Past, present, and future. And that's why we British

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folk are able to realize that we are Israel. There are seventy-two marks in the Bible by which we know Israel, and these seventy-two marks apply to the British Race and to no other. That makes you sit up, doesn't it?" Mr Pullrose demanded triumphantly. "Would you like me to run through these seventy-two marks?"

"Not all of them," said John hastily.

"Well, I'll just give you a few of them. I mentioned just now the Genesis prophecy that Israel's name was to be 'Great'. Right. Are we or are we not Great Britain?"

John nodded.

"Is there any other country called Great? You never hear of Great Germany, do you? Or Great Spain? Of course not!"

"But Great Britain wasn't called Great Britain until England, having swallowed Wales, bribed and bullied Scotland into the Union. Then Scotland became North Britain, England and Wales South Britain, and the two together Great Britain."

"Never mind why Britain was called Great," said Mr Pullrose. "All the Bible says is that God promised Abraham to make his name great."

"Yes, He promised Abraham."

"Well, that's the equivalent of Israel, and Israel is Britain. However, I'll give you another mark. Genesis again. *Thou shalt spread abroad to the West, and to the East, and to the North, and to the South.* The Bible doesn't tell us that Israel ever spread out like that. Why? Because the spreading out wasn't to take place until after Israel had been given a new name. West first. That's when Israel went to Britain. East next. That's when the British went to India. North next. Note the order. That's when the British went to Canada. And South last. Australia of course. But now listen to this from Israel which prophesies the return. *I will bring thy seed from the East, and gather thee from the West; I will say to the North, Give up: and to the South, Keep not back.* No other nation has the territory to fulfil that prophecy except the British."

"But if the whole British Race is to return to Palestine," John insisted, "it will be a bit of a squash, won't it? It's difficult enough already to squeeze in a small percentage of two of the tribes."

"Is anything impossible to God?" Mr Pullrose asked severely.

"No."

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"Then what's the good of talking nonsense, Mr Ogilvie, if you'll pardon me such freedom of expression? But listen to this from Deuteronomy. *And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour.* Where is this wonderful nation now? All over the Earth. British Israel in fact, which is regarded by the heathen nations as their deliverer and by whose help they prosper. You're not going to tell me that Moses was talking a lot of nonsense to the people of Israel? God moves in a mysterious way. Yes, but He knows what He's about. He's not going to lead His peculiar people up the garden path."

"Didn't he leave the Devil to do that in Eden?" John suggested.

"No red herrings now. No red herrings, Mr Ogilvie. It's worth your while to listen."

"I apologize."

"No offence taken. Now we come to the prophecies about Israel enduring for ever. They're all over the place. Now are you going to argue that God's going to tell a people that they'll last as long as the Sun and Moon and Sea, and then let them disappear in Assyria? It's unthinkable. And Disraeli knew it was unthinkable. He said that history would never record the decline or fall of the British Race. He being a Jew knew that Great Britain was Israel."

"But the fall of this world has not yet been fulfilled," John pointed out.

"All right. I won't press that point, but what about the prophecies that Israel's new home was to be north-west of Palestine? You'll find that in Isaiah and Jeremiah. And then in Numbers we read that Israel is like a lion. It's the British Lion, isn't it? Not the German Lion or the Russian Lion or the French Lion? And in Numbers again we are told that Israel is to be a great naval power. *He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters.* That's pretty conclusive, I think. And I could give you quotations from the prophets to prove that the separation of the United States was forecast. That was Manasseh, one of Joseph's two sons; and Ephraim, the other, was to become greater than Manasseh. It's as plain as a pikestaff—the United States and the British Commonwealth, but both of the House of Israel. Then we get all the prophecies about Israel living in the islands, and having

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a new language and, mark this, losing all trace of where they came from. That's in Hosea. Oh, I could go on indefinitely. But what about this? *In Isaac shall thy seed be called.* And that was confirmed by Paul. In his Epistle to the Romans—the Romans, mark you—Paul makes a particular point that all the Jews are not all Israel and repeats that remark which God made to Abraham."

"I don't see how that affects the case for British Israel."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Good gracious! I can only repeat 'Good gracious!' Who do you suppose the Saxons were?"

"They were a Teutonic tribe."

"Saxons simply means Isaac's sons."

"Really, Mr Pullrose," John protested, "that is philology gone mad. Saxons have nothing whatever to do with Isaac's sons."

"What does the word Saxon come from, then?"

"It's Latin, I fancy, probably something to do with *saxum* a stone."

"Stone?" exclaimed Mr Pullrose, more excited than ever. "That must be the Stone of Israel which you read about in Genesis. And where is it now? Under the King's throne in Westminster Abbey."

"Stolen from the Scots by Edward I and never returned by the English in violation of a treaty."

"Well, the Scots are certainly one of the Ten Tribes, so it doesn't really matter."

"Which tribe are the Scots?" asked John. "Gad, I suppose," he added, with a grin.

"Yes, the Stone of Israel is a token that God has entrusted to Israel the mission to break up all the other wicked nations. They've started already. Perhaps you remember Mr Lloyd George pointing out that Great Britain no less than four times has gone right outside her own frontiers to put down the tyrants of other nations. And she'll do it again, you mark my words. Finally, the whole lot of them will join together to overthrow Israel. And that's when God is going to get angry. That's when He's going to appear out of His secret place and come down to deliver His people Israel. What a day! And nobody's going to be more astonished than His own people when He lets them know who He is and reigns over them for ever upon this earth. The whole wonderful

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business is set out in detail in chapter 38 and chapter 39 of the prophet Ezekiel."

"When is all this going to happen?" John asked.

"Oh, I'm not prepared to name the actual year, though I've no doubt it could be worked out. However, I see you still have your doubts. I do wish I had time to go through all the seventy-two marks by which the British Race can be recognized as Israel. There is one more, though, that I'd like to give you. What's the uniform of the British Army?"

"Khaki."

"Ah, that's only when the army is at war. What's the uniform of the Guards in time of peace?"

"Scarlet."

"Exactly. Exactly," Mr Pullrose declared gleefully. "Well, what about this from Nahum? *The valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.* Well, that's pretty clear. If Nahum the Elkoshite had seen the Trooping of the Colour on the King's birthday and afterwards taken a stroll up Piccadilly, isn't that just the way he'd have described the condition of the traffic in our streets to-day? And this, mark you, this was written hundreds of years ago. Really, Mr Ogilvie, I think if you'll just sit down and read right through the Bible with an open mind, you'll be convinced that the people of Great Britain and the British Dominions are the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Don't you think it's very significant, to say the least, that the only people who don't persecute the Jews are the British and their brethren the people of the United States? We folk of Israel deplore that Judah and Benjamin should have shown themselves so obstinate in the matter of acknowledging the Messiah, but we must remember that we are all of us descended from Abraham, and therefore blood relations as you might say."

"But the English did persecute the Jews once upon a time," John pointed out.

"Not since the Reformation. Don't forget that the Romish Church is the new Babylon, and so naturally the Romish Church persecuted the Jews. And look at the way the Vatican fought against us during the war. Wasn't that a sign that the Pope and the Cardinals suspected that Great Britain was Israel? Of course

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it was. Oh, it's well known that the Kaiser is an agent of the Vatican, but whether or not he is actually himself a member of the Order of the Jesuits cannot be proved absolutely at the present. No doubt like everything else that will be revealed in due course."

Mr Pullrose sat back, blowing gently into his bosky moustache to recover his breath after such an effort of enthusiastic exegesis.

"Invincible!" John exclaimed. "Invincible! A nation which can produce British Israel to justify itself is definitely invincible. I really am most indebted to you, Mr Pullrose, for confirming the truth of my reflection about the invincibility of England. I say England, for if you are right about the origin of the word 'Saxons', I'm afraid you must exclude from Israel the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh, and the Cornish. I begin to understand now why the English were allowed to steal the Stone of Destiny from Scotland. It was evidently in the hands of a people who in spite of their determined ambition to be God's Chosen People never really appealed to Him as candidates for the honour. Isaac's sons! I really am grateful to you, Mr Pullrose, for that most imaginative piece of etymology."

"I only wish there had been time for me to give you the whole of the seventy-two marks. But we're getting pretty near to St Pancras. However, if you would like to go into the matter more deeply I'll be very happy to see you any time at my own place. You have the address: Ephraim Villa, Church Avenue, Peckham. I travel for Hitchcock and Burton the seedsmen. It would be as well if you dropped me a card so that I could let you have word if I'd be at home. The wife's always a bit suspicious of sudden visitors. She thinks I make friends too easily."

"Is Mrs Pullrose a follower of British Israel?" John asked.

"You've touched on a sore subject there, Mr Ogilvie."

"Indeed? I'm sorry."

"Mrs Pullrose *has* gone so far as to say that she thinks it a lot of nonsense," the man with the bosky moustache admitted. "In my experience women have very little imagination. However, I don't argue with her any longer. 'You have your ideas,' I say to her, 'I have mine.' One day we shall know who was right. It's too grand a subject for common or garden argument, Mr Ogilvie. That's what I feel."

"I think you are right, Mr Pullrose."

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"I'm sure I am. Oh, there's just one thing. Apropos of what you said just now about the Welsh. Don't forget that Brit or Britt is the Hebrew for Covenant, and so it is in Welsh. Therefore Britain is Covenant Land. Yes, I think the Welsh are one of the Ten Tribes. Well, here we are at our journey's end. It has been very very pleasant to make your acquaintance, and I hope we shall meet again," said Mr Pullrose warmly.

"I hope we shall," said John. "You've taught me a great deal."

In one of those small, fairly solid and flirtatiously Gothic bungalows which squat above the Alexandra Parade on the wide road leading from Glasgow to Edinburgh five men sat talking in the gloaming of the June day. The oldest of them, the owner of the bungalow, was a small man of seventy with a plump, pink clean-shaven face grown flabby and fast-thinning silvery hair which was still long enough at the back to trespass upon the collar and lightly frost with scurf the shoulders of the black broadcloth jacket he wore set off by pin-striped trousers and cracked patent-leather boots. Archie Beaton owned a ship-chandler's business on Clydeside prosperous enough to allow a living to his two sons and himself the retirement demanded by a weak heart. How he had ever managed to build up as much of a business as he had was a puzzle, for during the whole of his life he had been a nucleus of Celtic disaffection. He was a Gaelic scholar and bard of distinction as Gilleasbuig Peutonach, and able to write with equal pungency in English pamphlets and articles under the pseudonym Gadfly. He had been in the thick of the crofters' revolt in Skye and Lewis in the 'eighties, worked hard for Parnell in the 'nineties, undermined the Orange lodges in Glasgow during the first decade of the twentieth century, and devotedly served the cause of Irish freedom throughout the difficult decade that succeeded.

The other four men were young, indeed compared with Archie Beaton they were very young. One of them was Alasdair MacPhee, the traveller for the big Glasgow biscuit firm Loudoun and Gray who spent that night with John Ogilvie in the inn at Portrose. Of the rest one was a student at Glasgow University on the verge of taking his degree and being given a clerical post in Imperial Chemicals. He was a narrow-headed, red-haired young man, with a freckled

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nose and pale-blue eyes, in a suit of dark-green tweed whose thin ankles just emerged from the lower half of a pair of too long and too voluminous plus-fours. His name was Andrew Lawrie, the son of a Kilmarnock chemist. Then there was Hugh Goudie with a club-foot, a thin body all wires, and eyes as dark as the coal for which his father toiled in Fife. He was an assistant in a Glasgow bookshop and a poet forbye, whose black hair tumbled over a pinched swart face when he was stirred and whose high exasperated voice spoke for a creature of ardent and resentful dreams. The last of the quartet was James Maxwell, a tall, fair, raw-boned son of a Border manse, and a youngest son at that, whose father had hoped he would become a minister like himself but who, after a couple of years with divinity at Glasgow University, suddenly decided to be a school teacher instead and was bound for Jordanhill next autumn.

"Ach, I think you made a mistake, Jamie," Archie Beaton was saying in his quiet voice. "You'd have been wiser to stick to divinity, I believe."

"I couldn't stand the humbug of it any longer," Maxwell declared.

"There's plenty humbug in school teaching."

"I'll not give way to it," Maxwell vowed.

"You may not be talking quite so brash, my bold Jamie, when you're in the grasp of the Education Authority. Man, it'll get you. Yes, yes, another five years and you'll be as douce as a clerk who's reckoning to get married and hears the staff is to be cut down. You'll want this school or that school, and the only chance you'll have to get it is to keep in with the County Director. And if you did find you couldn't stand any more of it, all you could do would be to send in a letter of resignation, whereas if you were a minister you could always climb up to the pulpit and tell your congregation to go to hell, and what's more with the satisfaction of knowing that the majority of them would probably take you at your word. But to be serious for a moment, James, what the National Movement needs is a few ministers with as much guts as some of the priests in Ireland."

"Our ministers no longer have any hold over the people," James Maxwell averred.

"But they could have, Jamie, they could have if they'd look a bit nearer home for a possible paradise instead of concentrating so

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much attention on celestial housing-schemes in the sweet by and by after death."

"And couldn't school teachers get a firmer grip of the children than ever ministers can hope to get of their congregations in these days?" Andrew Lawrie asked. "I agree with Jamie that the Church is a dead end."

"A dead end?" Hugh Goudie echoed shrilly. "My God, I would think it was a dead end. And you ken better than most, Mr Beaton, just what a stinking dead end it is."

"It's so unimportant to-day," Alasdair MacPhee put in quietly, "that I don't know why you're getting so excited about it, Hugh. I don't really. If you have so much passion to spare, spend it on something more alive than the Church of Scotland."

"Ach, I believe the Church of Scotland is every bit as much alive as the people of Scotland are to-day," said Archie Beaton. "I believe Andrew here has picked upon the right profession. Imperial Chemicals! Yes, yes, that's just about what the people of Scotland are—imperial chemicals. I believe you have the best chance of the lot, Andrew, of producing an explosion."

"So you think the National Movement is just a waste of time, Mr Beaton?" Alasdair MacPhee asked.

"It's too soon yet to say that. But unless within the next two or three years it has moved forward a good deal faster than it is moving now it will be a heartbreak, and I'm old enough to think that breaking one's heart is a pure waste of time. That was the conclusion a few men in Ireland came to in 1916, when they were still young. We in Scotland have had the example of Ireland from which to profit, but on the other hand we are a great deal more Anglicized than Ireland ever was and we cannot afford to wait much longer, or it will be too late."

"Do you believe the country would respond to such a sacrifice as they made in Ireland?" Alasdair MacPhee asked. "John Ogilvie seemed to have his doubts when I talked to him last winter."

"I suppose in the end martyrdom must always achieve something," Beaton replied, "but I'll admit that our country is now as unpropitious a field for experiment in that direction as any in Europe. Yes, yes, the English would be clever enough to hand over to Scots the dirty work of making the martyrs, and the heids of departments still exert a potent fascination over their fellow

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countrymen." Archie Beaton chuckled to himself. "I wonder what James Ian would say if some of his juniors seized Edinburgh Castle or shot two of the police in Princes Street. Always a fervid believer in Home Rule for Scotland but not quite fervid enough to allow his belief to interfere with the political progress of James Ian himself."

"Who's James Ian anyway?" Lawrie asked.

"James Ian Macpherson, Esquire, Liberal M.P. for Ross and Cromarty. And James Ian has always had a soft spot for me, ever since he came out of Ireland without a bullet in him. Poor James Ian, they made him Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1918 and didn't let him out of the job till 1920. Yes, he always had a notion that I said a good word for him with the I.R.A. And indeed I really would have been sorry if they'd shot James Ian. Yes, he had a soft spot for me, and I've sometimes wondered if he didn't say a good word for me sometimes, for on the whole I was bothered here in Glasgow very little during the troubles. But it wouldn't be to somebody like James Ian that the English would hand over any Scottish patriots. No, no, they have the very man for them. The Right Honourable Sir John Anderson, P.C. Whether P.C. stands for Privy Councillor or Police Constable it might be hard to say," Beaton muttered. Then sharply he went on, "I wouldn't have twitched so much as an eyelash to keep him from being shot by the I.R.A. He was one of the joint Under-Secretaries to the Lord Lieutenant when the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries were invented. A strong man, the Right Honourable Sir John Anderson, P.C., with an upper lip on him that looks as if he'd been lifting weights in a circus for a living. When he left Ireland after the English had decided to come to terms he went to the Home Office as Permanent Under-Secretary. That was a warning to Labour not to become too Bolshie. Not that English Labour needed a strong man like Sir John Anderson. There was about as much revolution in English Labour as in a rusty waggon-wheel. The General Strike! Well, well, boys, I just sat back and laughed as long as it lasted. Yes, Sir John Anderson would be the lad to deal with anything in the nature of a Scottish rebellion; and believe you me, he'd be a very very tough proposition. However, I'm not shedding any tears for martyrs in Scotland, for I don't believe there'll be any."

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"You're as sure as that, are you?" Alasdair MacPhee asked.

"I'm pretty sure, Alec," the older man replied.

"I'm not then," Alasdair snapped.

"You're feeling like that, are you, Alec? Ah, well, you'll be off with your wee car again in a few days, taking your orders for biscuits. Alec, a *bhalaich*, I've seen the true spirit in Ireland, and the true spirit in this country is as far below proof as its own whisky."

"Something will have to be done," James Maxwell declared.

"Is that so, Jamie?" Beaton mocked. "But when you start you'll be careful not to upset the Education Authority, will you not? It might lead to a reprimand from the Director. A ; and a pretty stiff letter from the Chairman of the County Committee."

"Something *will* have to be done," Hugh Goudie exclaimed shrilly.

"Ay, ay, tell them that in this Lallans verse of yours, Hugh," Beaton advised. "And see how they'll all listen and obey."

"Something must soon be done," Andrew Lawrie declared, puffing at a pipe nearly as big as his own head.

"Ah, well, Andrew, you'll be among the explosives yourself presently, and we will be waiting for the big bang."

The young men sat smoking in silence, while Archie Beaton eyed them, a mocking glint in those strange leaden-blue eyes of his, which, weak though they were nowadays and rather watery, still commanded the attention of anybody they regarded.

"I don't want to be discouraging, boys," he said at last, "but when you've lived as long as I have and seen a country fighting year in year out for its freedom while your own country stood aside and sneered, you'll be past hoping for the miracle to happen. You'll just be sure that it won't happen. And you'll begin to wonder whether you aren't a prehistoric survival. Boys, I tell you I've walked down Sauchiehall Street and looked at my reflection in a shop window to make sure I wasn't a bogle. Still, I've had plenty fun out of it all. Oh, it was great during the war. Did you ever hear of M.I.5? You didn't? Ah, well, well, there was never a finer body of pure comedians ever assembled on any stage. It was their job during the war to protect the home front. So, of course, as you can imagine, they felt they had to keep a pretty sharp lookout on me. Yes, yes, they used to come and search the shop for

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bombs at regular intervals. Yes, and turn the house upside-down for compromising documents. I lived over the shop in those days. The Glasgow police weren't too well pleased about it because they knew me pretty well, but it was military orders and they couldn't do anything else.

"One day I was invited to go down to London and interview Colonel—ach, what was his name? Never mind, it's slipped my memory. He was a fine-looking fellow with bits of ribbon all over his chest and a nose on him like a ploughshare. 'Mistah Beaton, I believe?' 'The very same, Colonel,' said I. 'Will you take a seat, Mistah Beaton?' So down I sat, and he picked up the receiver on his desk. 'This is Colonel'—ah, dash it, what was his name?—'will you bring me the Beaton file, please,' and then he hung up the receiver and looked at me very hard to see if I was growing at all apprehensive. So I grinned at him and I said, 'That'll be a pretty big file, Colonel, I'm thinking,' and presently a good-looking typist lassie came in on tiptoe and put down a heap of papers on his desk, and went out again on tiptoe. The Colonel balanced a pair of huge black-rimmed spectacles on his nose and began turning over the papers. Then suddenly he looked up and glared at me very hard. 'We have reason to believe, Mistah Beaton,' he said, 'that you are being used as a letter-box by the Sinn Feiners, and if that is true it may be a very serious matter for you.' 'It would be a very serious matter for my inside, Colonel,' I said, 'especially with the kind of paper they're making now.' 'I'm afraid you don't realize the gravity of your situation, Mistah Beaton. If the War Office hands over your case to the police you may find yourself in prison.' 'Is that so?' I said. 'Well, if I've been turning myself into a letter-box I would have thought I was more likely to find myself in a hospital or an asylum.' 'Do you deny that you have acted as a letter-box in Glasgow for Irish rebels, Mistah Beaton?' 'I certainly do, Colonel.' 'Well, we have reason to suppose that you have. Are you an Irishman yourself?' 'No, Colonel, I'm a Scotsman.' 'You don't sound Scotch,' he bit out. 'Ah, we can't all of us be Harry Lauders, Colonel,' I said; 'I'm a Skyeman.' 'The island of Skye, eh.' 'Yes, yes, Colonel, that's right. I'm not an airman.' 'Well, we shall check up on that,' said the Colonel. 'But if you're a Scotchman, Mistah Beaton, how does it happen that you frequent the company of Irishmen so much? It's no use

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for you to say you don't, because we *have* checked up on that.' 'I wouldn't dream of denying it, Colonel. I have very many good Irish friends.' 'Most of whom are notoriously disloyal?' 'No, no, Colonel,' I said, 'you're mistaken there. I never met a more loyal lot. There's not one of them wouldn't give his life for his country.' 'The British Government regards such men as rebels, Mistah Beaton, and I'm surprised to hear a Scotchman talk the way you do.' 'I believe you will be, Colonel. You wouldn't be likely to hear a Scot talk like that on the music-hall stage.' He blew himself out a bit at this, but I just sat and grinned at him till he cooled down. 'My intention in asking you to come and see me, Mistah Beaton,' he said, 'was to give you an opportunity to put yourself right with the Authorities. And it occurred to me that perhaps you might be glad to give them some help.' 'Help?' I said, looking at him pretty sharp. 'What kind of help?' And boys, the silly b——r thought I was sniffing like a dog after a bone, for he said quickly that he was not asking me to work for nothing. 'Work?' I repeated. 'What kind of work?' 'Why, if anybody was to give you a letter that might interest us down here, and you were to take a copy of it, then you would be helping your country and yourself at the same time.'

"Well, boys, I just looked at him, and then I said to him, 'Colonel,' I said, 'I don't suppose you think I'm what you call a gentleman; but I know you're not what I call a gentleman, and therefore it's mighty improbable that either you or I would ever understand the other. So the wisest thing for me to do is to say "good morning" before I begin to be a little rude.' And with that I walked out. But I couldn't resist turning round to ask what Military Intelligence Twelve was like if his own was Military Intelligence Five. 'I mean to say, Colonel,' I said, 'at what number does Military Intelligence become certifiable?'

"When I got back to Glasgow M.I.5 set to work at following me around harder than ever, and in the end we arranged for one of the boys they wanted most to pass me a letter when there were two sleuths on the look-out. I was nabbed a minute later, taken to the police-station, and searched, when of course they found the letter. 'Dear Micky,' it said, 'this is to let you know that the British have just found out that Queen Anne is dead, and their Intelligence is trying to find out what she died of. Up the Rebels! Pat.' 'Have

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you any idea what this code message means?' an M.I.5 Captain at the police-station asked me. 'I've a pretty good notion, Captain,' I said. 'Oh, you have, have you? It might help you if you were to tell us the meaning.' 'Would it save me from being shot, Captain?' I asked, trying to look as nervous as I could. 'It would certainly tell in your favour,' said the Captain, his eyes bulging, because of course he saw himself becoming a Major and getting the V.C. for saving the War Cabinet from being blown up in their beds by the Shinners. 'Well, I'll tell you, Captain,' I said. 'It means that M.I.5 have been made to look as big a lot of bloody fools as they are, and by G——, that took a bit of doing.'

"Well, I was led off to the cells after that, but they didn't think they could put that letter across a Judge even *in camera*, and I was let out next day. Och, I could go on for ever with tales about M.I.5, but they're not likely to give me much trouble over you boys. No, no, I don't think I'll ever run the risk of a heart attack by being arrested on your account."

"We'll see," said Alasdair MacPhee.

"Ay, Alec, we'll see," Archie Beaton agreed. "Or we won't see," he added with a chuckle. "And now I think Flora will be making us a cup of tea."

Flora, the unmarried daughter who kept house for her widowed father, came in at that moment with the tray.

"Blethering?" she asked.

"Ay, Flora, just blethering," her father admitted. "Just blethering," he repeated, those strange leaden-blue eyes of his fixed upon the guests.

After tea the four young men took their departure and the old rebel sat by the open window in the rich twilight looking out at the car-lamps and the green glow of the western sky over Glasgow stained with the city's tawny murk.

"Just blethering," he muttered to himself, and presently his head dropped forward and he fell asleep.

In Hugh Goudie's room at the top of a dark house in a narrow close near Anderston Cross, the quartet forgathered to carry on the discussion of action. Andrew Lawrie sat on Hugh's inset box bed; Alasdair MacPhee took the pillow from it and squatted on the floor with his back to the wall. James Maxwell appropriated the old armchair with broken springs—the grubby flock stuffing of

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which was escaping by various slits in the worn chenille cover. Hugh Goudie himself sprawled astride the only other chair, his hands clasping the wooden back above which his dark eyes glittered feverishly.

"Well, we didn't get very far with our grand project at Archie Beaton's," said MacPhee gloomily.

"He was in one of his moods when everything's got to be ridiculous," Lawrie commented, plunging back on his host's bed and putting up his feet.

"Andrew, I'm going to sleep in yon bed to-night, thank you very much," Goudie protested. "Have you not enough round your legs with those plus-fours of yours without wrapping them up in my blanket?"

"Ay, he was in one of his moods right enough," Maxwell agreed. "But he fairly stung me over the Education Authority."

"Well, my idea," MacPhee went on vaguely, "is for each of us to find four fellows, but not to tell them who we are, and for those four fellows . . ."

"Which four fellows?" Goudie asked.

"The second lot of four fellows. There'd be thirty-two of them; no, wait, I'm sorry, there'd be sixty-four of *them* . . ."

"Are we a secret society or a bloody mathematical problem?" Goudie demanded truculently.

"I'll work it out on paper," said MacPhee.

"Not on my paper, you won't," Goudie told him. "I want all the paper I have for my own work."

"The point is that only the sixteen fellows we four fellows find will know who *we* are and from then onwards each successive bunch will only know who the fellows were that enrolled *them*. It's perfectly simple, really," MacPhee argued.

"If we're going to let sixteen fellows know who *we* are," Maxwell objected, "the whole of Scotland'll know who we are within a week."

"You're not following what Alec's after," Lawrie exclaimed as he took his pipe out of his mouth and spilt the ash on Goudie's bed.

"You'll know what I'm after, Andrew Lawrie, if you set alight my bed," said Goudie, "I'm telling you."

"Only four fellows knows who *one* of us is," Lawrie went on.

"Don't wave your pipe about, you clown," cried Goudie.

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"I wouldn't have to wave it about if you weren't so thick-headed, Hugh," Lawrie retorted. "As I was telling you, only four fellows know who one of us is. Isn't that right, Alec?"

"That's the idea," MacPhee agreed.

"Well, it's four too many," Maxwell declared.

"If it's four too many," said Lawrie, "the society stops with us, and a bloody fine secret society that'll be. Really, James, you make me tired."

"Wait a minute," said Maxwell. "My idea is that each of us will find one fellow, and he'll know only the fellow that found him. Then he can find four fellows and carry on as Alec plans."

"Gosh, I wish I had a dram for you, boys," Goudie groaned. "All this ready reckoning is giving me a powerful thirst."

Maxwell looked at his watch.

"We can get one before closing time if we're quick about it."

"That's it," said MacPhee bitterly. "Set out to form a secret society, and you all want a dram before you can concentrate. No wonder Archie Beaton laughed."

"Och, don't be so crabbed, Alec," Andrew Lawrie urged. "We've started on something big, and it can't be worked out in a minute."

And almost at once they were hurrying down the stone stairway of the dark house which smelt strongly at the bottom of stale urine, the entry being used as a convenience by homeward-bound drinkers from the bar at the corner where the conspirators hoped to get one before closing time.

Tigh nan Ròn—the House of the Seals—had been built on the southerly end of Castle Island where the vivid green plateau of lush level grass sloped down for two hundred feet to a shelf of rock some thirty feet above an inlet formed by the Castle rock still farther south with the rest of the island. This inlet was in shape a perfect oblong, the easterly of its four sides of black basalt open to the Minch. From the parapet of the loggia which ran the length of the white house one could look directly down into this rectangular inlet which had always been used by the great grey Atlantic seals as a swimming-bath and, to John's relief, was not deserted by them when their solemn and stately aquatics could henceforth always be

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overlooked. To the west of Tigh nan Ròn a small cove, with the help of a breakwater southward, gave shelter to a little sailing-boat with an auxiliary motor, the fury of the west being tamed by the larger Church Island and Rough Island. These were joined by a beach of rounded grey stones, on either side of which the dark columnar cliffs rose sheer for several hundred feet above the bottle-green water of the roadstead they formed.

The general opinion on Flodday, whence twice a week old Aulay MacAulay came over in the *Flora* with the stores, was that the laird of the Shiel Islands should have built his house on Church Island—Eilean a' Chille in the Gaelic. There was a fair amount of low-lying land there the moisture of which could be countered by lazy-beds. The ribs of them made long ago by the vanished tillers were still traceable among the rank grass and forget-me-nots, the yellow flags and meadowsweet and water-mint. There was shelter too from the north and east and a wide semicircle of gritty beach which never lacked driftwood. On the top of Rough Island, or Garbh Eilean, there was peat. True, it had to be carried in bags down a cliff path that might have made a goat dizzy, but what of that? It was the custom of the country. However, John was bent on building the house on that ledge at the southerly end of Castle Island. There was no sign that anybody had ever lived there; the island got its name from the castellated rock off the southerly point. His determination had cost him money, but now that the house was built he was glad he had refused to be deterred by the difficulties.

They had been lucky enough to get a calm cloudless five days at the end of June when the furniture and books arrived in a small steamer which remained at anchor in the roadstead while the long process of transferring the cargo to the *Flora* went on, and the longer process of carrying case after case up the path from the breakwater to the house. The air had flickered continuously with the wings of myriads of birds—razor-bills and guillemots, kittiwakes, puffins, and fulmar petrels circling the islands as flies a chandelier, and the wakes of the swimmers engraved upon the surface of the dull silver sea a mazy damascene which remained there long after the swimmers had taken to their wings again.

When the furniture had all been carried up to the house and the small steamer had departed there had been two days of superlative

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stillness with a low spring tide that allowed sea-caves hardly ever accessible to be entered, and John had devoted those two days entirely to his daughter, leaving the furniture and the books and the pictures to stay where they had been set down while such weather and such tides lasted. There was one cave in which a great emerald of sea-water blazed in what seemed the heart of it, and from the roof enamelled with rose and mauve a slim silver freshet spurted forth to meet the sea-water in a perfect curve. And then as the boat penetrated deeper the air in the cave lightened and the sides danced with reflected ripples until presently it was seen that the cave was an arch leading to a beach so nearly hidden by great basaltic columns on either side that they had passed it in the boat unperceived.

"I don't think there can be anything so lovely as this anywhere, do you?" Corinna asked her father.

They scrambled out of the boat and sat on this sun-bespelled noontide beach where on the landward side the grass from the plateau above seemed to brim over into the fissures of the dark rock, grass on which the orchises were spilt like wine. A fragment of one of the hexagonal columns had fallen upon the beach, and on this column covered with a tapestry of orange lichen they sat until the gurgle of the flowing tide warned them to re-embark and make their way back through the arch. The sun had moved, and the emerald had melted from the watery floor of the cave; the freshet had lost its silver and the sun's new direction had transformed it into a slim rainbow.

They tried again on other days to recapture that emerald and that rainbow; but they never succeeded, and the experience remained as unique as a glimpse of fairyland.

Padraig had arrived at the end of July for his holidays, every hour of which seemed to furnish for him and Corinna a new beauty or a new excitement. Then one morning in August they had woken up to find that the sea-birds had vanished in the night, and it had been all too soon afterwards that Padraig had vanished also—back to Ampleside for the Michaelmas term, for of course, as John told himself scornfully, he had surrendered to Padraig's gloom at the prospect of exchanging the Benedictine school for a Marist school in Ireland. He tried to persuade himself that if Ellen Fitzgerald had not supported Padraig so ardently he would have

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been firm; but he knew well enough that it was the softness of his own heart that was responsible.

"I'm no fanatic, Ellen," he told her.

And Ellen, who had grown plump with middle-age, had grieved comfortably.

"Thank God for that, John," had been her comment.

"But fanatics are wanted. Never was the country in greater need of them."

A day or two after that decision was taken three sacks full of daffodil bulbs had been brought over by the *Flora* with a letter from Cornwall.

PENDARVES HOUSE,
ST PETER'S, R.S.O., SOUTH CORNWALL

August 24, '31

Dear John,

Here's better gold than these rascals of bankers and politicians are squabbling about. And I'm sending three bulbs of Golden Corinna for Corinna to plant herself. We miss you down here, but you're well out of things on your island. The English deserve what they get if they stand for this new "National" Government. I don't often make jokes as you know, but I said to Geoffrey Vivian this morning, "The Norman Conquest was bad enough, but the Montagu Norman Conquest will be worse," and Geoffrey Vivian had the impudence to tell me I didn't know what I was talking about. The country has collapsed into hysterics like a servant-maid who's had her savings stolen. Yes, you're well out of it on that island of yours. Don't leave the bulbs kicking about all the autumn. They ought to be in by now.

Yours ever

Henry Pendarves

And long before Padraig went back to Ampleside the daffodils were all in.

About the same time as he left the seals had departed to their breeding-grounds west of Lewis and Harris and the two Uists, and by early October unless the wind was blowing hard the islands seemed almost unnaturally quiet and touched by melancholy. Sometimes was heard the scream of a peregrine as it swooped along the dark cliffs, sometimes the croak of the ravens whose young had

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been driven away to find a territory for themselves; and sometimes when the air was exceptionally still the distant bellowing of the stags was borne across the water from Lewis.

At the beginning of the month the Nationalist candidate won the Rectorial election in Glasgow, and John hoped for a few days that the country had recovered from its hysteria; but at the General Election the voters all over Great Britain returned to hysteria and made themselves safe for ultimate disaster by electing the first 'National' Government, a red, white, and blue chimera with the swollen body and gouty legs of a Conservative, the head of a Labour renegade on which the cap of liberty had turned into a cockscomb, the fawning tail of a Liberal renegade, and the plumage of a goose believed to be capable of laying golden eggs if trodden in low water by bankers. On Guy Fawkes Day Ramsay MacDonald announced the composition of his new Cabinet. The living rejoiced, and a million dead knew they had died in vain. During the night of that Guy Fawkes Day the barnacle geese had arrived from the north, filling the air with their piping, and in the morning when John and Corinna took a walk over the top of the island they seemed to erupt and hang overhead like the volcanic pine-shaped cloud over Vesuvius until they descended to the water and rested upon it, waiting for the intruders upon their immemorial winter grazing to disappear.

The intruders did not disappear, and in the course of a few weeks the sentinels seemed to recognize that neither John nor Corinna intended to do them any harm, for during their walks the geese merely removed themselves from the immediate neighbourhood and did not give themselves the trouble of taking to the sea or rising high in the air. Yet when one of the crew of the *Flora* came ashore not a goose would remain on the island.

"Yes, they're very like the National Government," John suddenly exclaimed aloud to himself on a cold calm January morning, a week after Corinna's eleventh birthday, when the *Flora* was drawing near with the stores and the sentinels were warning the grazers to be on the alert. "They cannot face up to foreign affairs."

Then he saw that there were two strange figures in the boat and hurried to take shelter in the house. Those who live on small islands dread the casual visitor as much as the barnacle geese, and

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Corinna was dispatched to spy out if the strangers were coming ashore and, if they were, what kind of people they seemed. She came back presently to announce that two men were coming up the cliff path.

"What kind of men?" her father asked.

She frowned in perplexity.

"I don't think they're any particular kind of men."

"Old or young?"

"They're not so old as Aulay. They haven't got white beards."

"I should hope not if they're going to camp themselves out on us for the rest of the day," John exclaimed irritably.

But the invaders turned out to be Alasdair MacPhee and Andrew Lawrie.

"I did write and ask if I might come and see you, Mr Ogilvie, and bring Mr Lawrie with me," Alasdair MacPhee explained apologetically. "And when I found you wouldn't have been likely to have had your post I was a bit doubtful about coming. It was old Aulay who said you wouldn't mind, and insisted on our getting into the boat."

"I should have been extremely disappointed if you hadn't come," the host assured his visitors. "Well, how are things going?"

"That's what Andrew here and I want to talk to you about. I think we've started something at last."

"You have?" John asked quickly. "I'll be interested to hear all about it, Alasdair. It's a year almost to a day since we met at Portrose."

"And we've had heavy snow on the mainland just as we had then," the young man said. "But out here the weather's grand. Andrew can't believe it's true, can you, Andrew?"

The red-haired young man in the voluminous plus-fours shook his narrow head.

"Gosh, it's wonderful, I'm telling you, Mr Ogilvie, if anybody had told me about this house of yours I wouldn't have believed him—I really wouldn't." He walked over to the windows of the book-lined room and blinked his light-blue eyes at the low wintry sun and the dazzle of the sea. "Gosh, it's great," he murmured in awe. "It's an awful pity we've got to go back so soon, Alec."

"Oh, but you're both going to stay the night," the host insisted.

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"But we didn't bring anything with us," Alasdair demurred. "And I'm in the islands on business."

"Och, your biscuits will wait, Alec," protested Andrew Lawrie, who had no intention of spoiling his adventure for the sake of a few biscuits.

"The weather's calm and settled," John said. "I think Aulay won't mind anchoring the *Flora* for the night. And if he does he can come over for you in the morning. I'll provide you with pyjamas and the rest of it."

"It's putting you to a great deal of trouble, Mr Ogilvie."

"No trouble at all, Alasdair. We'll make another night of it."

So after dinner John and the two young men settled down to discuss the future in that heavily-curtained library which held upon its shelves so much of the history of the past.

"It's too bad Hugh Goudie and James Maxwell couldn't be with us," said Alasdair.

"I'm sorry Jamie isn't with us," Andrew Lawrie agreed. "But och, I'm not missing Hugh at all. He'd have been laying off about books, and before we knew where we were we'd have blethered away all the time we have. No, no, Alec, we're better as we are. I mean to say, we've got to be practical." And with this the representative of Imperial Chemicals produced a curved pipe with a bowl that looked almost as large as his own head, and after lighting it he leaned back in the deep armchair to puff out clouds of tobacco-smoke that seemed the very effluence of worldly wisdom.

"Last January at the inn in Portrose, Mr Ogilvie, you said to me that we had no young men willing to shame Scotland out of individualism by the sacrifice of their lives," Alasdair MacPhee reminded his host.

"I also said," John put in quickly, "that I did not believe Scotland possessed any longer the spiritual force to feel the shame even of such a sacrifice."

"Archie Beaton says the same," Andrew Lawrie reminded his companion.

"All right, all right," Alasdair exclaimed impatiently. "I'm not suggesting we are to make the experiment to-morrow. What I want from Mr Ogilvie is an assurance that when he thinks the time has come he will not shrink from exacting death."

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"That's a fine thing to ask a man after a good dinner," Andrew Lawrie muttered. "Let him drink his brandy comfortably, Alec. You Highlandmen are always away up in the air. You're not practical."

"We're a damn sight more practical than you Lowlanders," Alasdair retorted hotly. "Sentiment, that's all you care about. Here's tae us, wha's like us? Oh, god almighty, Andrew, you make me vomit. You and Hugh Goudie at the last meeting we had! What you weren't going to do! Scotland belonged to the pair of you. Ay, just as Glasgow belongs to Will Fyffe on Saturday night. Dying was it you were? Small wonder you didn't want Hugh here to-night. There's no cemetery in Scotland would be large enough to hold the pair of you when you start dying theoretically. Archie Beaton does well to laugh. He's wise."

"Let's leave dying out of it for the moment," John suggested. "I gather you have managed to start some kind of association?"

Alasdair MacPhee gave him an account of the growth of the secret society the foundation of which had been built that evening last June.

"But we don't want just to play at mystery, Mr Ogilvie," said Alasdair. "We want to work practically, and that's where we need your advice."

"How many members have you?"

"Eighty-eight in all now."

"Of which, as I've understood your plan, only one man knows one of you four."

"And only four know that man," Alasdair added. "There are sixteen in all making the third circle. Then each of those is known by four men. That's the fourth circle, consisting of 64. The fifth circle will be 256 plus 88."

"I see," said John. "And the sixth circle 1024 plus 256 plus 88, and so on."

"If we get as far as the eighth circle we'll have 87,320," observed Andrew Lawrie, shaking his head portentously. "That's a tidy lot. I haven't worked out beyond the eighth circle. But 87,320 is a lot."

"And at present you've eighty-eight," John murmured, constricting a smile.

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"Enough to make a start," Alasdair went on eagerly. "And that's what we wanted to consult you about. How are we to use those eighty-eight men to the best advantage?"

"Well, I'm afraid I shall sound discouraging," said John, "when I suggest that the best use you can make of those eighty-eight members at present is to aim at completing the fifth circle. That would give you a total membership of . . ." He started to do the sum in his head.

"344," Andrew Lawrie told him.

"Well, with 344 you can do a good deal more than with 88. I take it that when you talk of using these 88 to the best advantage you don't mean addressing public meetings or putting up Parliamentary candidates?"

"We're sick of words," Alasdair MacPhee exploded. "We want action."

"That's what Tom Mosley's New Party wants, isn't it? But you know, this country—and by this country I means the whole of Great Britain—isn't at all in sympathy with action, and when a stage is reached that makes action essential the people of this country always turn round after the crisis on the man they entrusted with action. I'll go no further than Lloyd George and the war. And there was the same kind of resentment against the Duke of Wellington a century earlier. Now if legitimate action is distasteful, how much more distasteful is any kind of irregular action. This ignominious Government which has just been elected, has been elected for the express purpose of guaranteeing inaction in the near future. But I'm talking in terms of the Parliamentary candidate," John went on, "and you're using the word action without higher taxation attached to it. Have you thought out any definite action?"

"Well, we have discussed something between ourselves. That is . . ." Alasdair hesitated.

"Mr North, Mr West, Mr South, and Mr East," John put in smiling, for these were the names by which he had been told the four founders of the Airts (thus had the secret society been entitled) were known.

"But only among ourselves," Alasdair emphasized. "We haven't even let Archie Beaton into the secret."

"And you think I'm to be trusted?" John asked.

"Och, we trust Archie Beaton all right," Andrew Lawrie put in.

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"But if the thing went wrong we didn't want to give him the satisfaction of laughing at us."

"I really must meet Archie Beaton," John said.

Alasdair looked up at him in sudden suspicion.

"No, no, Alasdair, not to laugh at you," he was assured. "And don't take me into your confidence unless you feel quite at ease about that."

Mr North and Mr West looked at one another.

"What effect do you think it would have, Mr Ogilvie, if the Stone of Destiny was taken away from Westminster Abbey and brought back to Scotland?" Alasdair MacPhee asked solemnly.

"I think myself it would be electric, absolutely electric," Andrew Lawrie affirmed, leaping in his chair like a landed trout.

"What do you think, Mr Ogilvie?" Alasdair pressed.

"Why, I believe it might be electric," he admitted, and then he had to drop his pipe and bend over to pick it up in order to mask an uncontrollable grin at the picture of Edward I carting away the Stone to Westminster and Andrew Lawrie carting it back again to Scotland.

"What I feel," Alasdair continued eagerly, "is that if the people of Scotland did not rally to the support of the men who brought back the Stone of Destiny it would be a proof that nothing could stir them and we could give up wasting our time to achieve the impossible."

"Would you propose to announce what you had done when you had brought it back?" John asked. "Or would you propose to hide the Stone until the country's awakening?"

"That's one of the things we wanted your advice about," said Alasdair MacPhee.

"My first impulse is to say, 'Hide it at any rate until you know what the country's reaction is.' This kind of exploit nowadays is so much at the mercy of the manner in which the newspapers present it to the public. Not to mention the B.B.C."

"But do you think that if such an undertaking were successful it would make an impression on the people of Scotland?" Alasdair pressed.

"I think the experiment is worth making," John replied. "But I won't pretend to forecast the result of it."

"I think the result would be terrific—terrific," Andrew Lawrie

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declared. "I mean to say I ask myself what I'd be thinking if I read in the *Daily Record* one morning that the Stone of Destiny had vanished from Westminster. I'm telling you, it would be better than beating England twenty goals to nothing at Hampden Park."

"And when you've exhilarated the country by bringing back the Stone, how do you propose to take advantage of the emotion?" John asked. "That's important to consider, isn't it? I've always opposed putting forward a programme for the National Party because I've been thinking in terms of Parliamentary elections, and I believe it would be a mistake to compete with the platform programmes of existing parties. I don't think a Nationalist candidate can afford to stand for anything except the restoration of Scotland to a sovereign State. But direct action such as you propose will necessitate offering the country an immediate opportunity to approve or disown your action."

"But if the Stone was hidden—say as near as possible to Dunstaffnage," said Alasdair MacPhee, "why wouldn't we be able to wait the result of the next General Election, which of course would mean contesting every seat in Scotland, and if they were all won calling upon the members elected to refuse to go to Westminster, denounce the Treaty of Union repeatedly violated by England, and set up the Scottish Parliament again in Edinburgh?"

"What if the British Government caused every candidate to be arrested as an accessory after the fact in connection with what they would call the stealing of the Stone?" John asked.

"Then fresh candidates would come forward," Alasdair declared.

"I don't want to pour cold water on your enthusiasm," said John, "but I'm bound to say the result of the recent General Election doesn't encourage me to believe that the Scots are in any mood to strike out for themselves. Cheviot and Blackface went bleating to the polls as submissively as Leicester or Southdown."

"They've not been stirred yet," said Alasdair.

"That's right, Alec. They want stirring. You can't make good porridge without stirring it," Andrew Lawrie spluttered.

"True enough," John agreed. "And I've no right to spoil your porridge with cold water. I do want you both to understand that I believe the experiment *is* worth making. It's a more exciting experiment, Lawrie, than you're ever likely to be called upon to

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make in Imperial Chemicals. And now there's another thing. How are the finances of the Airts? I'm not going to pry into your plan of action, but I know it won't be spoilt by a little spare cash."

"We didn't come to see you, Mr Ogilvie, to ask for morey," said Alasdair. "We wanted to know what you thought of the idea."

"All the same, Alec," Andrew Lawrie went on eagerly "if Mr Ogilvie would like to contribute to the expenses we're not going to pretend we're so flush as all that."

"It won't do for me to write a cheque," John said. "I have to go to Glasgow on business in March, and I'll leave the note for you with Archie Beaton. I'm going to ask him if he'll call and see me at the Central. I've always wanted to meet him. I won't suggest meeting Mr East and Mr South at present because I think it'll be wise for me to know as little as possible about this raid over the border."

"No, no, you'd better not, Mr Ogilvie," Andrew Lawrie hastened to agree. He was looking forward to bragging to Hugh Goudie about the books at Tigh nan Ròn and telling James Maxwell the way his host had paid attention to his advice. "I'm telling you, Jamie, he was awfully much impressed by my judgment of the political situation. Och, Alec was blowing away about the sacrifice of blood and all that, and I brought the conversation back to realities."

"Look at Andrew," MacPhee scoffed. "Dreaming you're Wallace, Andrew?"

"I'm not dreaming at all, you big clown; but I'd sooner dream I was William Wallace than travel around selling biscuits, dreaming I'm Bonny Prince Charlie, the way you do, Alec."

John intervened with the decanter.

"A dram is indicated. Water, Andrew?"

"I'll take mine neat, thank you, Mr Ogilvie," said Andrew, with a defiant glance at his companion.

"Mind you don't burn your tongue," the latter jeered.

"Oh goad, Alec, you've got a nerve. You really have," the indignant Andrew protested.

John felt that he was responsible for this mood which seemed in danger of being created by what his young guests might think was

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his failure to respond to their plan of action.

"To come back to the Stone of Destiny," he said, "the more I think about it the more I see the possibilities of such a coup. But it'll take doing. Do either of you know Westminster Abbey?"

"Two of Andrew's group in the third circle are away down in London now?" Alec said. "We'll have a report next week. We're not going to rush the job, and I think we'll have to wait till late into the year because we'll want a long night for the drive back to Scotland, and by the time we've got everything in order we'll be well into the spring."

When the time came for his guests to go to bed, John took them to their rooms and stayed for a while with Alasdair MacPhee.

"You've done more than I expected, Alasdair, already," he said to him. "Don't think I wasn't stirred by what you told me to-night, and if you'd been alone I should have been able to express my feelings better. That's no reflection on our good friend Andrew, but you made me open my heart last January, and as one grows older one does not open one's heart so easily."

John went across to the window and watched the casement. The sea was lapping the rocks below as quietly as the waters of a loch its reedy banks, and the moonlit air was still and sharp as crystal. The Great Bear was nuzzling the northern sky. The geese were piping in the grass, and over on the beach between the islands opposite the oyster-catchers were shrilling to greet the turn of the tide.

"A magical night on which to hear of a magical enterprise," he murmured. "Good-night, Alasdair." He turned round as he spoke, and when he looked into the young man's eyes he could fancy he was still staring at the stars. He turned quickly away and hurried out of the room, for his own eyes began to prick with tears.

It was the final rehearsals and first night of a new play which took John to Glasgow that March. Corinna needed clothes. So she and Mairi accompanied him, and they stayed at the Central Hotel. Here he and Archie Beaton met.

Before his guests left Tigh nan Ròn John had obtained their permission to admit Beaton into the secret of the projected attempt to bring the Stone of Destiny back to Scotland. They had not

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been too willing at first, but John had given on Beaton's behalf a solemn promise that he would not laugh at the enterprise beforehand or jeer at them if it failed.

The old rebel grinned sardonically and those strange leaden blue eyes of his twinkled when he heard of this pledge.

"Derision is a pretty powerful tonic, Mr Ogilvie, if it's used with reasonable discretion," he said. "And God knows the young men of Scotland require bucking up, as they say. There's a sharper urge from laughter than this post-war whisky can provide. My dear old friend Norman MacIver is well out of this world of ours. Let's hope the Elysian whisky is a few degrees nearer proof. He'll be sitting cross-legged among the asphodels just now, laying off over a dram, I'll be bound. Did you ever meet him?"

"Indeed, yes. I met him first over thirty years ago. We saw in the twentieth century together at Ardvore House. And he's really responsible for my present address."

"Ach, of course, I'm not wise. He talked to me about you. Oh, well, poor Norman! We were together in the troubles in Skye and the Long Island before the Crofters Act when I was in my twenties. You know, Mr Ogilvie, the most unpleasant part of growing old is the way one forgets the immediate past, the way time flies faster and faster all the while when we're going downhill."

"What would Norman MacIver have thought about this plan to bring back the Stone of Destiny?" John asked.

"He'd have thought it a pretty severe threat to the heids of departments. Man, do you realize that if the undertaking is successful Whitehall will be deserted and Ramsay MacDonald will become a permanent feature of the Lossiemouth links? Ay, even John Anderson, my jo, will have to look for a job at home."

"And do you think the country will respond?"

"Ach, I'm pretty pessimistic about the country. Maybe I frequent the company of our Irish cousins too much to be a fair judge of Scotland to-day. But it's my idea that the Scots have accepted the situation and that their main object in life is to make the most of it. I often ask myself why the hell I'm worrying about the future of Scotland, and you know it is very foolish if you come to think of it, because it's certain that the only future the people of Scotland worry about is the future of England. It would be a long

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time before they found such profitable and easy neighbours. And with this slight tendency in England nowadays to become really democratic the Scots will be more at home there than ever. No, no, Mr Ogilvie, I'm bound to say that under present conditions there's little to attract the ordinary Scotsman in the notion of independence. True, there's quite a widespread feeling in favour of Home Rule, but that's mostly inspired by the idea that the country could be run more efficiently and more thriftily that way, with a good rake-off for city fathers and suchlike. That wasn't the notion behind Home Rule for Ireland. The notion behind Home Rule for Ireland was that it would be the first step to secure Ireland's complete independence of England. I believe every Irishman has an instinctive feeling that England is nearer to death than his own country and so his impulse is to cut himself free."

"And you think that impulse is dead in Scotland?"

"Och, I think so, Mr Ogilvie, generally speaking. Moreover, there's no economic self-confidence in Scotland. We have a saying in the Gaelic, better the fringe of plenty than the centre of want. And I think that is the belief of Scotland as a whole."

"Then why do you go on fighting for an idle dream?"

The leaden-blue eyes that gazed at John before their owner answered his question seemed inhumanly opaque. They were pebbles which had been rounded by the slow grinding of glaciers melted aeons ago.

"People like me are a biological necessity, Mr Ogilvie. We serve the evolutionary spirit as a measure to test its strength. We will become extinct when we have served our purpose. But it is conceivable that Ireland may stand out against the trend of civilization and preserve humanity from the hives and the ant-hills to the imagined perfection of which it seems to aspire. Therefore the evolutionary spirit cannot afford to get rid of us for a long time to come. You'll observe the same innate fear of allowing France to be overwhelmed by the Teuton. The stupidest English politician and, my god, that's touching rock-bottom in the way of human stupidity, feels within himself a compelling necessity to preserve France. Yet, France is an anachronism. Yes, yes, a complete anachronism. Nevertheless, if France were no more, Europe as we know it could not long survive without a country to take its place; and to my thinking Ireland is being preserved as a kind of

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insurance against the fall of France. Yes, yes, people like me and you, Mr Ogilvie, are biological necessities. Look at yourself. Has it never struck you as rather mysterious, to say the least of it, that you should hold the opinions you do? You have no quarrel with the present on material grounds. You have made a name for yourself. You have enough money to be able to afford to build yourself a house on a desert island and take a suite at the Central Hotel, Glasgow, ay, and you want plenty money to be able to do that. If you had political ambitions of the conventional kind you could gratify them. You know all sorts of well-known people. You belong to the great world, as they say. You've nothing to be discontented about at all, materially speaking. Yet, here you are chasing a dream, just chasing a dream. What's the idea? What's the idea of handing over a hundred pounds for me to pass on to these young lunatics who are out to bring the Stone of Destiny back to Scotland? By every standard to which you conform it's just daft. And the only way I can explain such daftness is that you're another like myself who's being deliberately preserved by the revolutionary spirit as a measure to test its force. Have you ever asked yourself—but of course you must have, you must have asked yourself why you were preoccupying yourself with the restoration to independence of a country of which by birth and circumstance you yourself are independent."

"I think you're right," John said. "I think it is the expression of a fundamental disharmony with the trend of the times. And yet I am a happy man."

"Och, well, I don't suppose that the pterodactyls who were being preserved by the evolutionary spirit as an insurance against the experiment of developing a monkey into *Homo sapiens* felt particularly unhappy when they flew over that miserable object known as the missing link."

"And so you and I are a couple of pterodactyls," John commented with a smile.

"Just about what we are," Archie Beaton agreed.

"I'm not sure that I agree with what you said about France and Ireland. I don't see how Ireland is ever to take the place of France."

"I would call France the fine flower of Celticism, and if France goes the Celtic idea will have to rely upon Ireland."

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"Celticism," John repeated doubtfully. "You know, I think a lot of nonsense is talked about the Celts. I don't believe that the qualities we call Celtic are Celtic at all. The Celts were really Teutons who benefited by the civilization of Rome. I prefer Atlantean. By the way, Spain is surely another great repository of the past? I think there's a lot to be said for the theory that survivors from Atlantis have maintained the line of descent from Palaeolithic man instead of deriving like the rest of Europe from Neolithic man. This could provide a much more satisfactory explanation of what we call the Celtic temperament. A phenomenon like *Ramondia Pyrenaica* is suggested."

"For God's sake what's that?"

"Well, before the Glacial Period the botanical family of the Gesneraceae was represented in Miocene Europe. As the ice advanced these brilliant plants were exterminated and their contemporary representatives are found now on the other side of the South Atlantic. That suggests a bridge in the shape of a great island continent, since submerged. The best known of the Gesneraceae is the gloxinia. In their natural state they grow on the steamy vegetable-mould of the jungle and their endeavours to attract insects by showy blossoms are liable to be disappointed in the green glooms where they live. So in order to procreate themselves they evolved ages ago the ability to grow bulbils from the midribs of their shed leaves that lie decaying upon the ground. One of these Gesneraceae managed somehow to survive the Glacial Period. It is called *Ramondia* and is found in rocky clefts of the Pyrenees facing north, and thus like its Miocene ancestors and its Amazonian cousins in their green glooms avoiding the rays of the sun. And now listen to this. In spite of its separation by thousands of years from the Gesneraceae of South America, like them it can still be propagated from the midrib of its leaves by slitting them and pegging them down in moist warm vegetable mould. If a plant can preserve the past like that, why not a human being? I regard *Ramondia Pyrenaica* as another witness to the reality of Atlantis because I cannot believe that any plant could have survived the fullest rigour of the ice age. Yes, I think that *Ramondia* may be, must be, indeed, a relic of Atlantis."

"I wouldn't say that Andrew Lawrie is a relic of Atlantis," Archie Beaton chuckled. "How would you account for yon wee man?"

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"It's not difficult to understand the reason why so many young people in Scotland are attracted to Nationalism," John replied. "They want a background. They feel lost in the vastness of a modern imperialistic State. Such vastness induces a sense of futility, and a sense of futility paralyses life. I see no hope for the future of mankind unless these huge aggregations destroy one another and their monstrous cities. In point of fact they will not need war. Within a century, at the present rate of soil erosion they will be starved into extinction. I feel that the only chance for humanity to survive is by limiting the size of the individual State to a maximum population of ten millions and federating the world by the process of free travel and free trade."

"In what way free?"

"Free in every way, so that any man may move about the world as he likes provided he is not a drone. You implied just now that the mission of Ireland might be to lead the world back from the evolutionary course it is now following. So I take it you agree with me that man is doomed unless he can escape from the prison of great cities and the slavery of supplying them?"

"I certainly do agree with you, Mr Ogilvie. And so, as wee Andrew Lawrie says, let us stir our porridge."

It was at this moment that Corinna came in, full of tales of shopping adventures.

"You'd better be talking to Mr Beaton in the Gaelic," her father advised.

"Oh, well, well," the old man exclaimed in admiration, "she speaks it without any taste of English at all. Isn't that good now? And how do you like living on the Shiel Islands?"

"I like it very much, thank you."

"I'm sure of that now. Plenty of birds to look at, eh?"

Corinna nodded.

"And seals too," she said.

"Ay, bound to be, bound to be."

"They have a swimming-bath just underneath our house."

"Have they indeed?"

"And I watched one the other day stand on his head in the water and wave his tail in the air."

"Ay, ay, just the way you'll see a politician stand on his head on a platform and wave *his* tail in the air."

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"I've never seen a politician on a platform," Corinna said doubtfully.

"Have you not? Ah well, you'll get more pleasure and profit from the antics of the seals."

"I'm going to tame a baby puffin this year," Corinna announced. "In May, perhaps."

"Good enough. Will you be able to feed him?"

"Yes, I think so, because I know where there's a rock pool with small fishes. And I'm going to try and teach my baby puffin to talk."

"Well, puffins can make all kinds of queer noises, right enough. I don't see why they wouldn't be able to talk."

"They're awfully like parrots," Corinna suggested hopefully.

"Ay, that's true. They're terribly like parrots."

"You didn't let me into the secret about this plan of yours, Corinna," said her father.

"Well, I meant it to be a surprise when my baby puffin spoke to you, but I forgot when I was telling Mr Beaton."

"Tell me, maid," said the old Skyeman in Gaelic, "would you ever be seeing the fairies?"

She shook her head.

"I've tried to lots of times. Once in Cornwall I thought I saw one, but it was a green butterfly. Have you ever seen a fairy?"

"Long ago I saw them one morning. It was a lovely morning in the month of June when I was a lad of seventeen. They were sailing out to sea in little boats made of *seilisdeir* leaves."

"Iris leaves," said Corinna. "We have lots of irises on Eilean a' Chille, and there's a beach there. Oh, I do wish I could see some fairies."

"Keep a good look-out. Keep a good look-out," Archie Beaton advised, fixing those rich blue eyes of hers with those strange opaque eyes of his own. "It was at sunrise of a lovely calm morning in the month of June of the year 1878 when I saw those fairies putting out to sea from a small beach at the north end of Skye, and it came to my mind, I remember, that they were sailing away from Skye to the Shiel Islands. So keep a good look-out, *a nighean*, keep a good look-out."

"Mairi's grandfather saw the fairies once," Corinna said.

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"And who would Mairi be?" the old man asked.

"She's my nurse."

At that moment Mairi Macdonald came into the room to warn Corinna it would soon be time for tea.

"That's a fine young woman," Archie Beaton observed when he and John were alone again.

"She's from Moidart."

"From Moidart, eh? Ah, well, well, it was in Moidart that Alba's heart was heard to beat for the last time. Will it ever bear again?"

"Perhaps, if our young friends bring back the Stone of Destiny . . ."

"Och, there'll be too much chatter about it beforehand," Archie put in sceptically.

"That's not quite fair," said John. "It was I who persuaded them to let you into the secret."

"Wait you till they see this subscription you've sent," Archie Beaton prophesied, patting the wad of notes that filled the inside pocket of his black broadcloth jacket. "There'll be plenty talk then. The whole of Glasgow will know what they're planning before another week's out."

"You mustn't laugh at them too much, Mr Beaton. You'll get me into trouble if you do."

"Ach, they're not bad. You haven't met Hugh Goudie, have you?"

"Not yet."

"I believe there's a touch of genius about that lad. Well, I mustn't waste your time blethering any longer, Mr Ogilvie. I hope your play will have a success, but I hear they usually do, and that's a highly satisfactory state of affairs."

"Will you come and stay with me in the island some time?" John asked.

"Ach, I don't believe I will, Mr Ogilvie. I've not been back to Skye for some years now, and when you get to seventy you have a kind of a superstitious feeling about going back to the land of your youth. It has a way of suggesting it's time to be setting your course for Tir nan Òg. And I don't want to die just yet, Mr Ogilvie. Things are just beginning to get a bit more interesting in spite of the National Government. Borrowing money from France and

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America to lend to our dear friends in Germany and then cutting the salaries of school teachers to help pay the loss on the deal. If that isn't a daft notion I'd be happy to know what is. Yes, yes, I'd like fine to visit you in your island home, Mr Ogilvie, but I have a dread of discovering just how old I am. Well, I hope that wee daughter of yours teaches her puffin to talk. That'll be another good candidate for the National Government."

And chuckling to himself the old rebel left the hotel sitting-room.

John had suggested that Miriam Stern should come up to Glasgow and go back with them to Tigh nan Ròn. Somewhat to his surprise, she had taken him at his word.

"It's not the height of hospitality to look so astonished when a guest arrives," she told him with a smile.

"Well, it's your own fault if by now my invitations have seemed a conventional epistolary ending to which you always made the same conventional reply," he retorted. "You've been coming to stay with me in the vague future for so long now that I'd abandoned as a practical possibility the delightful fact of your ever one day really doing so. And now you've let yourself in for the first night of a play."

"That will be exciting."

He shook his head.

"Not a bit exciting. It's just a piece of virtuosity."

As such the play was well received, and the author could expect a good run when it was presented in London two or three weeks later.

"But if you're so dissatisfied with this kind of play, John, why don't you turn your back on mere virtuosity and at the risk of comparative material failure try to express some of your essential self?" Miriam Stern asked when the first-night party was over and she and John were sitting in the hotel room crowded and untidy with used glasses like an unweeded garden.

"The one aspect of contemporary life I want to express dramatically is politics, and that is impossible with the censorship, which was devised in the eighteenth century for the protection of politicians. Do you think the National Government is going to allow itself to be undermined by theatrical audiences? The censorship

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has been encouraged to pass for performance plays which on moral grounds would never have been contemplated as fit for performance twenty years ago, and the foolish intellectuals are thereby doped into imagining an inclination toward greater freedom, which of course is completely illusory. There was never less chance than now of getting a vital political play past the censor. It's a pity, because there was never greater need to rouse the people of Britain to the danger that threatens them."

"What danger, John?"

"The danger of living too long on their own fat," he replied. "What might not be done with the freedom of an Aristophanes?"

"Aristophanes did not save Athens," Miriam pointed out.

"He was up against a Pericles," John reminded her. "An Aristophanes of to-day would be pitted against more destructible material."

"I think contemporary literature is already too much obsessed by politics," she said.

"We live in a period when people are obsessed by politics because we have not decided what are to be the economics of the future."

"Do you think we are any more obsessed by politics to-day than at any other period of history, John? I believe the obsession is permanent. But great art has been able to rise above it until now."

"It sounds as easy as pressing the button of a lift when you say that," he replied, smiling.

"Yes, I'm afraid it was a piece of shallow sententiousness. Your party has left me rather limp. I *am* in my seventieth year, and must be forgiven."

"Here surely you should be immune from politics," Miriam exclaimed when two days later she stood with John in the loggia of Tigh nan Ròn upon a serene morning in March. "You should be as remote from the present as that crusading world in which you are at present encouraging your small daughter to spend her eleven-year-old existence."

That evening after dinner John was regretting that there was no piano yet on the island.

"Which shows I had given up hope of your ever coming here," he observed.

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"It was an old letter of yours, John, which suddenly overcame my indolence."

"An old letter?" he frowned in interrogation.

"It was written in March 1901," she said, "on the eleventh of the month, and in March 1932 when another letter of the same date reached me I was seized with an abrupt desire to take advantage of such a long and loyal friendship, and accept that invitation which you felt had become a conventional wind-up to a letter."

"March 1901? That was when I was in love with Rose Medlicott."

"Yes, it was the letter in which you first told me about her. It was rather a remarkable letter for a boy of eighteen to write, and looking back at myself from the edge of seventy to the edge of forty, thanks to that letter I could not consider myself ridiculous for being in love with you myself. Oh yes, John, what a battle that letter gave me to fight!"

"I doubt if I should think it a remarkable letter," John observed.

"No, I haven't brought it with me," Miriam said. "But in view of what you told me in Glasgow about your politics you may be interested to hear that you said falling in love with Rose Medlicott had proved to you that what you had considered your mission in life was a mistake because your ability to fall in love with a girl so essentially English as Rose was a proof that you could not bring to such a mission the fanaticism it demanded."

"What did I consider my mission at that date?" John asked.

"To ruffle the Celtic fringe in the company of people like your friend Fitzgerald was the way you put it, and I must say to find you now over thirty years later still engaged in the task of ruffling the Celtic fringe does seem to me a tribute to political consistency of which you can feel a little proud, I think."

"Wait a minute," said John, and presently he came back into the library with a letter in his hand. "Two can play at this game," he declared triumphantly. "Here's your letter dated March 13th, 1901, which must have been the answer to that one of mine." He turned over the pages. "Listen to this," and he began to read:

"There is a danger, you know, in doing as you are doing and concentrating at your age all the aspirations of youth on an ideal

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embodied in a single woman. And remember, it's you yourself who supplied me with that criticism when you told me that falling in love with your Rose had put out of your head your mission to ruffle the Celtic fringe. Not that I want you to involve yourself in political adventures. I have seen too much misery from that in Poland. But I'm not sure that you will be content presently at having sacrificed your beliefs so readily. The completeness with which you have thrown them over for this English ideal is a little disquieting to me.

"You're not quite so consistent, Miriam," he commented. "Surely that was the moment to urge upon me the futility of politics?"

"But, John," she protested, "I don't think you had decided at that date to be a writer. Besides, my judgment was warped by jealousy. I was jealous."

John was reading on through the old letter.

"Oh, Miriam, listen to this about Emil," he exclaimed presently:

"You won't mind if I don't tell him your news? He's such a strange boy and I would not like him to write anything to you that would froissier your friendship. I fear I have handed on to him my jealousy. The fundamental trouble is this wretched division between the Jew and the Gentile. It is less insisted upon in England than elsewhere except perhaps Holland and the Scandinavian countries, but it is harsh enough even here. . . .

A Jewish woman is less exposed than a man to this continuous reminder of an inferior status, and what do you think it was that brought home to me as a girl this ultimate equality? A story in the Arabian Nights. I had been weeping for the woes of Scott's Rebecca in Ivanhoe, and that very evening I read the story in the Arabian Nights about the Prince whose sorceress wife turned the lower part of him into marble and transformed into fishes the inhabitants of the city he ruled. The Mahometans into white fishes, the Christians into blue fishes, the Parsees into red fishes, and the Jews into yellow fishes. The picture of those fishes swimming about in the pool, all equal as fishes, was very colourful and very consoling. When Emil first went to St James's I tried the effect of this story on him. He said rather

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wittily I think for a boy of thirteen, 'And no doubt the red, white, and blue fish thought they were the Union Jack.'

"That *was* rather good, you know," John commented. "I'd forgotten that story."

"It was soon after writing that letter I first met your stepmother. It was after a performance of Ibsen's *Doll's House*," she murmured pensively.

"Yes, and we went to tea at Buszard's," said John. "And Emil was very severe on Ibsen."

"Yes, and I thought your stepmother would be thinking him such a prig. He wasn't yet seventeen then."

"I shudder to think what he would have said about my play the other night," John laughed.

Miriam sighed.

"You never see him nowadays, John."

"Oh, I see him as often as I see most people," he insisted.

"I wish Yan and Erika could come up and spend some time with you and Corinna," their grandmother exclaimed.

"Why shouldn't they?"

"Well, I don't know that this system Emil and Astrid follow of bringing up their two children on the theory that one must never check or thwart a child makes them ideal guests."

"You speak rather feelingly."

"It's not fair of me to talk like that, John. I shall be giving you quite a wrong impression. They're dear children, and Yan is almost as remarkable in his own way as Emil was at his age. But a genius for mathematics—and I think it can be called that—doesn't have quite the civilising effect of the classics. I suppose musical genius is equally independent of manners. Julius was somewhat farouche in those far-off days."

"He had good manners," John insisted.

"Well, it never entered my head that it was right to allow bad manners to be overlooked because the correction of them might have a stultifying effect upon the growing child," Miriam murmured half to herself, with a slightly rueful little smile. "Dear Julius!" she exclaimed, changing abruptly from the minor to the major key. "How delicious to think that he and Leonora and all the family will be in England this summer. I do hope nothing

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will change that plan . . . and I remember you came to dinner with us that night after the Ibsen matinée, and Julius was being somewhat aggressive with Emil."

"And I remember Elise had said to me almost casually that you were inclined to be in love with me," John went on. "And I was so utterly taken aback by such an idea that when I saw you again that evening I blushed."

"Ah, John, I knew your stepmother must have guessed and while you and Emil went off to have your talk I played *Caraval* to Julius, tormented by the emotion of my own folly. Thirty-one years ago on perhaps this very date!"

"And late on that evening I remember you encouraged me to talk about Rose, and I was much embarrassed by the notion of having to explain that passion could not possibly intrude upon such an idyllic love-affair. And when I blushed more deeply than ever, you said I was old enough not to blush at the simple facts of life."

Sea-green velvet curtains . . . grey walls . . . slim tall figure in black . . . a white hand resting upon a piece of silver brocade thrown across the arm of the high-backed settee . . . fine red bow of a mouth upcurving in an ironical smile, but a tenderness in her dark eyes that took from it the least hint of mockery.

The picture of her upon that March night thirty-one years ago was so vivid that now, recollecting in tranquillity an emotion of vanished youth, John was almost shocked to behold the vision of his mind's eye turn to the Miriam of to-day.

"But how generous you were to me," he said hastily as if he feared to be caught out in the comparison and must protect her against it. "It was that March night you suggested taking a cottage near Milbourne for the Easter holidays."

"And Emil saw through that generosity," Miriam said. "He knew that I was in love with you."

"But . . ." John stopped.

"Oh no, he never suspected the sequel. That need not worry your pride now."

He looked at her reproachfully.

"Have I ever in the years that have gone by since given you cause to make such a remark?"

"John, of course you haven't. I should have done better to reflect upon my own vanity than upon your pride. Enough of

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those reminiscences inspired by nothing except an idly sentimental and insignificant reflection upon a coincidence of dates. Yes, I wish you had a piano here. I recover my mental vigour when strumming. I mount my Steinway as an elderly gentleman mounts his nag to stimulate a jaded liver in Rotten Row. Now tell me more about Corinna. How is the System working?"

"You make me feel like Sir Austin Feverel. I hope I shan't make as much of a mess of Corinna's life as he made of Richard's."

"I don't think you will, John. Meredith made a mess of his son's life in fact as well as fiction. He was that particular kind of an egotist."

"Well, it's rather soon to talk about success or failure. We're living in the twelfth century now and everything's pretty easy. I have moments of doubting whether I am building too smooth an ivory tower for Corinna's youth, but as you know it is not my intention to keep her enclosed. We shall be travelling in due course. I thought it would be as well to make the first year a quiet one, but I do have my moments of doubt. Last Sunday we were at Mass in one of those big Glasgow churches filled with the very poor. It's a restless experience. Babies crying. Children coughing. Women in shawls shuffling in and out all the while. The effect is rather like a spiritual railway station on a bank holiday where people are catching trains to find some place for their souls' health. The very priest in the pulpit gives out the notices for the week like the times of trains arriving and departing; the confessional boxes look like so many booking-offices; and as for the altar-boys one would never be astonished to hear them suddenly call out 'chocolates' or 'papers' or 'cigarettes'. I find such experiences immensely humbling. There one is with one's doubts and queries and perpetual striving after faith, with one's dainty nose grateful for the faintest whiff of incense that will disguise the permeating fug of unwashed humanity, with one's nice taste offended by the tawdriness of the statues and the gimcrack wedding-cake reredos, with one's ears distressed by what seems the never-ceasing clink of pennies in the plate, there one is indeed like a bewildered stock-broker who finds he has to travel back to his roses and his wine and comfortable country house in an excursion train. One feels out of tune with one's surroundings and out of sympathy with one's companions, and one is inclined to ask fretfully why no attempt is

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made to raise the aesthetic tone of the whole business as one asks fretfully sometimes why actual railway stations must be so infernally ugly and noisy and dirty. And then suddenly one realizes that all these poor people are so infinitely more precious to Almighty God than oneself . . . oh, I tell you, Miriam, it is most beneficially humbling. Well, I came out from Mass in that mood of humility and I was acutely nervous that Corinna would say something that would show she felt herself superior to the welter of childhood in that great gaunt Glasgow church. I was dreading having to snub her, because in my own chastened mood that would have seemed such an affront to what I'll have to call the better side of me."

He paused.

"I'm sure she didn't say anything for which you had to snub her!" Miriam asked gently.

"No; she said in a meditative voice, 'I don't think God will be annoyed.' 'What about?' I asked. 'Well, you know you gave me sixpence to put in the plate?' 'Yes.' 'Well, I didn't put it in. I put in my lucky farthing.' I asked her what she did with the sixpence, and she told me she had left it on the floor where she'd been kneeling. 'I thought perhaps one of those little girls or boys kneeling next me might find it,' she explained."

"That was perfect alms-giving," Miriam commented.

"Yes, I thought it was rather good," he agreed. "In fact it made me wonder if I was justified in keeping her shut up here away from such promptings of love. But I don't think she'll lose those impulses easily, do you?"

"I wouldn't worry if I were you, John."

"Yes, I think I'll write to Astrid and suggest her bringing Yen and Erika here for the Easter holidays."

"Erika is fairly easy, but I warn you, John, that Yan really is rather difficult. You're not going to ask Emil?"

"I think I'd rather have him by himself some time. Anyway, I doubt if he'd be able to get away from his office for as long, and it wouldn't be worth making such a journey for a day or two."

"You think you'd be involved with Emil in arguments over children's education. I warn you that it's Astrid who is the leader in this non-thwarting business."

"I can deal with Astrid," John proclaimed confidently.

"Well, I shall be safe in Claremount Gardens by then," Miriam

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said. "What a lovely evening it has been, John. The sort of evening when one looks forward to going to bed in order to think over what a lovely evening it has been."

The Liberty Bookshop still flourished in New Oxford Street, but the activities of the Liberty Press were now included under the imprint of Emil Stern, and the publisher's offices were in Aztec Street, Bloomsbury, where he and his family occupied the upper half of a tall solid early-Victorian house. Here at breakfast in the dining-room on a grey morning in that March Astrid passed a letter across the table to her husband.

"It is from John," she said. "Miriam is now with him and he wants so much that I should take Yan and Erika to stay for a while with him on his island."

"Aren't I invited?" asked Emil with an ironic smile. Except for short trim whiskers he was still clean-shaven, which gave full play to that finely-cut mouth so unusually red for a man on the edge of his forty-eighth birthday.

"You will see, Emil, that he does not suppose you can leave the office long enough to make such a journey worth while."

Astrid had lost even the faint trace of a Scandinavian accent, and beyond the slightly prim enunciation of one who has acquired a language later in life, nobody could have guessed that English was not her native tongue. Tall and slim as she was and with that pale flaxen hair parted in the middle above her high forehead, she did not look her age. The cheek-bones were a little sharper in the oval face and the Christmas-rose complexion had faded to pallor, but few would have given her as much as forty and none forty-five. She was no longer taking an active part in the business side of publishing, for she had turned to writing novels which appeared at sufficiently long intervals to impress the little intellectual world of London with the amount of trouble they gave her to produce, and as she possessed an agreeable analytical subtlety without a vestige of humour and with a serenely complacent introversion of the imagination, her work was treated with great respect by critics whose own infrequent creativeness was inseminated, paradoxically, by letters, not life.

While Emil was reading John's letter Astrid turned to Yan,

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who was two months older than Corinna, and so much like herself as to suggest parthenogenesis.

"Yan dear, I don't want to be inquisitive, but why do you like so very much to spit into your puffed rice?"

Yan screwed up his glacier-blue eyes and gazed coldly at his mother.

"Well, I think that's my secret, Astrid," he replied.

"Yes, darling, of course I wouldn't dream of intruding upon it."

Then she turned to Erika, aged nine, whose auburn hair and sherry-brown eyes always surprised people but were, as Astrid used to tell them, a wonderful example of the well-balanced mixture of Scandinavian and Jewish blood.

"And is your spitting a secret too?" she asked.

Erika nodded gravely.

"Not just a little imitation of Yan?" her mother pressed, inwardly reproaching her still insufficiently controlled maternal propensity to judge a daughter with less objectivity than a son.

Erika shook her head.

"How does this proposed visit appeal to you?" Emil asked, handing back the letter.

"It is perhaps rather a long way to travel so early in the year," Astrid replied. "I expect Miriam has suggested it to John. Would you like to go, Yan?"

"Where?"

"To John Ogilvie's island. It seems there are many birds there which he thinks you would find interesting."

"I'm not a bit interested in birds," Yan declared indignantly.

"And Corinna wants to meet Erika again," Astrid added.

"Why?" Erika asked. "When she came to see us last year she told me a daffodil had been called after her, and I said, 'that's nothing, I've had a book dedicated to me!'"

"Does Miriam think we should like John Ogilvie's island?" Yan enquired.

"She thinks you would like it very much, darling," his mother replied.

"I don't think Miriam knows what I like," said Yan. "She thought I would like that book called *The Heroes*."

"Well, you must find out for yourself what you like," Emil

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put in. "But I must say that when I was ten I liked *The Heroes*."

"I'm eleven," said Yan severely. "I'll be twelve in November."

"I could almost have worked that calculation out for myself," his father observed a little sharply.

And at the other end of the table Astrid shook an admonishing forefinger. Sarcasm was not considered good for children. It was capable of developing an inferiority complex.

"It's time to get ready for school," she warned her children, who at present were attending a bisexual establishment in Gordon Square where inhibitions were chased into the open like clothes-moths and not a single educational fad of recent years had been overlooked. The question whether to send them presently to a wonderful new school in Bedfordshire where the children went about naked when the thermometer rose above 70° was now under consideration.

"I thought I wouldn't go to school to-day," Yan announced.

"Why, darling?" his mother asked. "Or is that a secret too?"

"I thought I wouldn't go either," said Erika.

"I wish you wouldn't always think the same as me," her brother grumbled.

"I don't."

"Yes, you do."

"I don't, do I, Emil?" she insisted.

"I'm getting rather tired of this conversation," Emil proclaimed as unreasonably as a paterfamilias of the Victorian prime.

"I shall be quite glad if you don't go to school," Astrid told the children, "because I was going to ask you if you would so kindly help me with the Disarmament Petition. I've such a lot of papers to sort."

Yan looked across at his sister.

"If you're coming to school this morning we'd better start."

Astrid smiled at Emil when the children had left the breakfast-table.

"It's so strange to me when people say they find children difficult to manage," she murmured. "They did not seem very anxious to make this visit to John's island, and I am glad really, Emil, because John has such queer old-fashioned ideas and I wouldn't like them to be upset by superstitions Corinna might put in their heads."

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"I don't worry about John or Corinna," Emil said. "What I *am* a little worried about is the effect of Julius and his family when they come over this summer. He's growing more reactionary all the time. This Catholic nonsense strangles the mind, and it has the vitality of a python."

"How do you explain such vitality?"

"One is apt to forget the slowness of the evolutionary process. That's the danger of an exclusively intelligent society. We exclude ourselves."

"But what society could one enjoy if it was not an intelligent society?"

"Oh, I agree with you; but it does induce a false security of the mind. What is so obvious to us assumes too easily the possibility of becoming obvious to the rest of the world."

"But you quite alarm me, Emil, when you talk like that about Julius. Surely he could have no effect upon Yan and Erika."

"I was thinking more of the effect of his children on them. After all, Yan and Erika with all the freedom we allow them have been guarded against association with the products of reactionary minds. And they *are* children. We must remember that. They *are* plastic."

"I shall certainly not take them to visit this island," Astrid declared. "In a week or two all our care might be wasted. It is really frightful to think of."

"Yes, but what exasperates me is that we should have to feel nervous about the effect on them. We ought to be able to feel that they are invulnerable against superstition. Perhaps they are. But the doubt is there. We know that they are safe against dinosaurs on their way to school in Gordon Square. We need not worry. Dinosaurs are extinct. But dinosaurs of the mind like Catholicism and Capitalism and Fascism are still at large. I'm growing alarmed by developments in Germany. I think we may soon see there an unpleasant manifestation of reactionary force. Jews have provided the only civilising influence in Germany and if anti-Semitism is unleashed, as in my opinion it will be, Europe will have to face disaster. I feel no security about the future."

"Don't you think, perhaps, that your Jewish prejudice makes you exaggerate about Germany as a whole. I know so many charming and intellectual Germans. Of course I recognize what

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the Russian Revolution has done for human progress, but I cannot say very much for Russians as a race. I find myself much nearer mentally to the Germans, and I think all Scandinavians feel that. You see, you have never had the Russians as neighbours."

"You forget that I am a Polish Jew by origin. I have no more reason to like the Russians than yourself. I do not question the existence of civilized Germans, but they are in a much smaller minority than civilized Englishmen. We laugh at the English, Astrid, but I do believe they are the most widely civilised nation in the world."

"I cannot accept that proposition, Emil. I do not think they are so civilized as the Swedes."

"There are more of them. Fortunately for Sweden, I think. Otherwise in Sweden you might not believe there were so many civilized Germans. However, we've got right away from the immediate subject under discussion, which was whether you and Yan and Erika should visit John on his island this Easter."

"I think not, Emil. We might all be eaten up by a dinosaur. And now I must go to my Disarmament Petition. We are having such an encouraging response from all sorts of people."

"And I must go down and read the letters in the office," the publisher added.

The dining-room at 8 Aztec Street was empty. On the wall what appeared to be a piece of stained and faded pink blotting-paper on which a child had been drawing a doll's house with white and yellow chalk looked down from its frame upon the remains of breakfast. It was a picture by Matisse.

John was warmed by a sense of relief to hear from Astrid that she did not feel up to undertaking such a long journey with the children so early in the year. His invitation had pleased Miriam, and that had been the real prompting of it. He was more relieved than ever when news came that David was proposing to visit the island at the end of April, having got back from Hollywood that March.

And on the last day of the month came a letter from Arthur to thank him for the present of a platinum watch on his twenty-first birthday:

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My dear old John,

The watch is marvellous, and it excites much envy among my friends. It's so thin that I keep putting my finger in the pocket of my white waistcoat to be sure it's still there. You couldn't have thought of anything I would have liked as much. I'd rather hoped to tell you I would be coming over this summer, but Grandfather is pretty feeble and I doubt if he will last out this year, and I don't think I ought to leave Grandmother. I've settled to go in for law after all. So I'll take a fourth year at Harvard. I had a notion I might practise in Paris. I'm told it's quite a bright idea for an American lawyer to practise in Paris. There's a good deal of divorce work apart from the usual tangles liable to arise for Americans in Europe. As you know, I had thought of the diplomatic service but from what I can gather the State Department is a bit prehistoric, and though I think things may brighten up if, as I hope, Governor Roosevelt gets the Presidential nomination at Chicago and is elected in November, I doubt if he'll be able to restore it to life. If the Democrats don't pull it off, I tremble to think what will happen to the U.S.A. But I think they must. Even at Harvard, which has never been a conspicuous supporter of the Democracy, most of the people realise that it's either Roosevelt or Revolution, such an almighty hash have the Republicans made of this country.

But I wasn't meaning to write you a letter about politics. I have a personal problem which is pretty urgent. I'm of age now and, John, it's no use beating about the bush, I don't want to marry poor Blanche one little bit. I look back to eighteen months ago when Mother came out here to see what she could do about my infatuation and I feel—well, I just can't put down in words what I do feel. It's all very fine talking about destiny, but how can I help reproaching myself with being indirectly the cause of her not being alive to-day? I realise now how much she must have been worried by the prospect of my marrying Blanche, because the thought of doing so is simply fantastic to me—eighteen months too late. And I think Blanche herself knows it, but Mrs Halloway never lets go. John, that old dame has a grip. She's determined I shall marry Blanche. Of course, I know all I have to say is that I'm of age now and that I'm terribly sorry and all that, but I realise what a mistake it was. And if I've walked

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down Broadway once rehearsing the whole scene I've done it twenty times, but every time I turn around the corner into West 46th Street and see the Picardy Hotel the wonderful scene fades out of my mind and I go on in the same old way.

Well, last night I told Grandma I couldn't marry Blanche, and she said she would speak to Mrs Holloway and explain matters. And I've agreed to let her do this for me. And I'm running away to Maine till everything's all over!

Write and tell me you think I'm a pretty contemptible specimen; I certainly am. You must be laughing at the notion of my thinking I'm going to practise as a lawyer in Paris.

How's Corinna? Give her my love and tell her I'll write soon to thank her for the superb pullover. I've been so preoccupied with this feeble muddle of my life I've made over Blanche that I haven't had the heart to write any letters. I wish I could have come over and talked to you, but you'll understand that after letting Grandma do this for me I couldn't run quite as far as that.

Thanks again for the watch, and for lots of things.

Yours

Arthur

To this letter John replied:

TIGH NAN RÒN, SHIEL ISLANDS,
By FLODDAY, INVERNESS-SHIRE
April 11th, 1932.

My dear Arthur,

Very nearly just a year ago I saw you and Blanche together, and I met Mrs Holloway, and I felt convinced that within a few more months you would be wondering why you had ever supposed you wanted to marry Blanche and her mother. Do not reproach yourself about what has happened. You are far from having enjoyed an unique experience. I cannot console you by saying the same thing happened to me, but that was only my luck. It easily might have happened, and I should hesitate to believe that if it had I would not have availed myself of other people's help to get me out of such a jam. Mrs Langridge will have been able to hold her own with Mrs Holloway. Of that I feel sure. And if Blanche thinks you have displayed a certain amount of moral cowardice, that will help to persuade her she is

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well out of any permanent association with you. She took the risk when she became unofficially engaged to somebody who was under age and at least six years younger than herself. I fancy you wouldn't have found Mrs Halloway very anxious to hold you to your word if the Langridges had suddenly lost all their money. I believe Blanche was genuinely fond of you, but I do not believe she was so much in love as to think the world we had lost on your account.

And do not reproach yourself with being the cause of your mother's death. We should all of us bear too heavy a weight of responsibility if the cause and effect of tragical accidents were laid upon our shoulders. We have enough remorse to suffer from the cause and effect in human relationships for which we must accept the responsibility. It has never once entered my mind to reproach you for my loss. If your mother had not gone to America she would not have died in America, but if she had remained in England who would dare to say that she would be alive this April?

I am glad you see that it is your duty to remain near your grandparents and you are most right in deciding not to come over here this summer. I can understand Mrs Langridge's liking the idea of Paris. She will probably want to be with you when you are reading French law, as you will have to do. Your father is buried in Paris.

I look forward to hearing soon that your entanglement has been unravelled without too much difficulty, and that the future has ceased to present itself to your fancy as a dangerous and disagreeable maze.

David comes to us at the end of this month, and I shall hear of the gloomy state in which no doubt he saw you last at the approach of what you must have been thinking was a fatal twenty-first birthday. I wonder if you had enough enthusiasm to entertain your Harvard friends at a celebration, for I presume that twenty-firsters are celebrated at American Universities. Corinna is glad to hear the pullover met with your approval, sends much love, and expects a letter soon.

I'm interested by what you say about the Presidential election. We know nothing of American politics over here, and our Press is apparently quite incapable of enlightening us. It's a pity the

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B.B.C. doesn't make the attempt, but I suppose if it did the nitwit critics of the Press would denounce such an attempt as a highbrow assault upon the devotees of what is called vaudeville. I should like to understand what is going on in Germany too. If the public was as much alarmed about this queer creature Hitler as they are at present about the spread of the musquash along the banks of British rivers, we might view the international horizon more confidently. As it is, there is a general belief among old and young that if we disarm and thereby demonstrate to the rest of the world that we have no intention of trying to help ourselves to any more of it, we shall be regarded as another choir of angels proclaiming peace on earth to men of goodwill.

*Yours ever,
John*

And just after this letter was posted to Arthur, John heard from Mrs Langridge:

• *Dear Mr Ogilvie,*

Arthur tells me that he has written to you about his decision not to marry Miss Blanche Holloway, and I thought you would be glad to know that I have seen Miss Holloway and her mother and made clear to them both the altered condition of Arthur's feelings. I cannot pretend that it was an agreeable interview. It was not, though I must exonerate Miss Holloway from any blame for the most uncomfortable vulgarity of her mother's attitude. I do not think that vulgarity is too strong a word. Indeed, so persistent was she in making unpleasant insinuations about Arthur's behaviour that at last I was driven into making it quite clear that should Arthur be so unwise as to suppose he must make this imprudent match, Mr Langridge would be compelled to add a codicil to his will depriving him of his inheritance if he should marry Miss Blanche Holloway. This seemed to give Mrs Holloway food for reflection and I took advantage of her silence to retire.

I have heard no more, and I think we can assume that the matter is closed.

This is the first opportunity I have had to thank you for your help a year ago at a time when your own sorrow might have re-

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leased you from any consideration for a selfish old woman. I have not forgotten your kindness. It is always in my remembrance. Mr Langridge desires me to give you his compliments. He has grown very frail. I do not think he will live much longer

With my cordial regards,

I am,

Most sincerely yours,

Cornelia Langridge

In the end David did not reach the island until June, much to the disappointment of Padraig, who had to go back to Ampeside without that store of knowledge about the film-world with which he had been counting to entertain and impress his companions at school.

It was over two years since John had seen his half-brother and he was struck for the first time by a likeness to old Sir William Hunter, his grandfather.

"Why Hollywood should bring out a latent resemblance to a Lord Justice of Appeal, David, I cannot surmise; but it certainly has."

"Well, it must be so," David said, "because my mother noticed it too. She was rather gratified. I think she felt there was something to be said after all for the profession I have chosen. But, John, you don't look a day older, and my hat, you'll be fifty in October."

"Did you make your thirtieth birthday the subject of an apostrophe last year?" John asked.

"Damn it, John, there's a difference between thirty and fifty."

"Sez you, in the language of your world."

"What a pity you don't go out to Hollywood as a script-writer. You oughtn't to waste your Wardour Street American. Seriously though, John, you ought to go out there. You'd pull in a packet. I can't think why you don't turn your attention to the films."

"Two of my plays have been mangled by them. I wish all laundries paid as handsomely for their destructiveness."

David shook his head.

"The usual down-the-nose angle. Don't be too sure you're not close on fifty, John. There's a suspicious smell of lavender

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about you as if you'd been laid away in a drawer since the war. But we'll argue that out another time. I want to see all over the house. Do the geese still come in winter? I must make Noll come up with me and have a shot at them in January."

"You can't shoot our geese, Uncle David!" Corinna exclaimed.

"Can't I, young Corinna? You wait till you see me and Uncle Noll at work on them. I've got the very gun for the brutes."

"But you can't," Corinna repeated firmly. "He can't, can he, Father?"

"All he can shoot here are scenes for one of his films," John ruled.

"As a matter of fact, John, this would be a peach of a location for a romantic thriller. Do you remember that film Janet Meriday made at Citrano? Being flung off cliffs into the water by brigands and I don't know what not. It was a pretty good effort for those days. Marvellous woman. She's still going strong. Got married for the fourth time and we had her wedding breakfast and my birthday dinner on the same day last September. And her two first husbands proposed and seconded the health of the bride."

John noticed that his daughter was frowning with the same perplexity as once upon a time she had frowned over *Don Juan*.

"How's Redroad?" he asked to change the subject.

"Bob Redroad? Oh, he's still directing. He's a bit old-fashioned for the talkies; but he knows his job. And he takes some beating even now for handling a crowd. Hullo, I say, look at those seals. I say, they're marvellous. By Jove, I'd like to shoot that spotted fellow."

"Uncle David!" Corinna expostulated in horror.

"Not with a gun, you little fathead. With a camera. And the birds too."

"My baby puffin died," Corinna announced sadly.

"What of?" her uncle asked. "Asthma?"

"Well, I don't know exactly. But I don't think he liked the fish I gave him. Padraig and I dug him out of his hole."

"And you've got the nerve to lecture me for wanting to shoot a lot of great lumbering greedy geese."

"I didn't want him to die. I wanted to teach him to talk."

"Sez you, to copy your father's showy command of the American language."

"I'm half an American," Corinna proclaimed.

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"Well, I wish you'd coach your father in your half-native tongue and teach him some American a bit later than George Washington's."

"I like George Washington."

"Truthful fellow, wasn't he? Father, I cannot tell a lie. My hat, some of the Presidents that came after him made up for it, didn't they?"

"Who's going to win next November?" John asked.

"Have a heart, John. It's a bit early to look for the winner at Manchester."

"Not the November Handicap, you zany. The Presidential Election?"

"Hoover, I suppose," said David casually.

"Not Roosevelt?"

"That stuffed shirt," David exclaimed. "I shouldn't think he'd an earthly chance."

"That's not what Arthur says."

"Poor old Arthur! He's in no condition to prophesy about anything. I never in my life saw anybody so completely flummoxed by the future."

"Why is he like that, Uncle David?" Corinna asked.

John nudged David to warn him Corinna knew nothing of what had happened, and then added quickly that Arthur had written full of cheerfulness about everything.

"He wrote to me last week," Corinna told her uncle. "I expect he was worried about his exams, wasn't he?"

"That's about what it was," David assented.

That evening when they were alone together John told his brother of Arthur's rescue from marriage by Mrs Langridge.

"Well, when I saw him in March before I sailed," David said, "he was in a galloping apprehension. However, I'm glad he's got out of it. Do you remember when I wanted to marry Janet?"

"I didn't know it went as far as that."

"Well, it didn't really. But my hat, I'd have looked funny as one of her four-in-hand, wouldn't I? John, why don't you think seriously about films? It's silly to lean back and sniff at them as if they were a bad smell."

"It's too late for me to start on films now. I was keen once

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upon a time, but I found they were in the hands of nitwits trying to entertain nursemaids."

"Yes, I know, twenty years ago. But what's the good of judging films by what they were twenty years ago? The theatre was still alive then."

"The theatre isn't dead yet," John said obstinately.

"I'm not so sure. Up to last month since January sixteen plays were produced in London with an average run of nine days. That doesn't look much like life."

"A series of failures can happen at any time. And none of the plays deserved to run," John said.

"Doesn't it suggest a dearth of new dramatists?" David asked.

"Dearth of new dramatists are periodical like famines in the East," John replied. "Besides, there are other reasons to account for the present difficulties of the theatre. Obviously the novelty of talkie films is bound to have an effect on theatrical audiences for some time, not to mention the depression."

"John, you're arguing a bad case," his brother insisted. "When the cinema began to affect the theatre seriously over ten years ago I'm sure people were talking about a novelty that would wear off. Isn't it significant that the most successful recent play is Noel Coward's *Cavalcade*, which is an attempt to compete with the films?"

"But that is not the reason of its success," John replied. "*Cavalcade* provides soothing syrup for those who may be faintly wondering if the future of this country is quite so secure as it was. It is a dramatised version of Stanley Baldwin's mind. It is bromide to quieten pacifist hysteria. We don't *want* to fight, but by jingo if we do! And I understand arrangements have been made to produce this pageant of English life and thought—this cigarette-card series of England in peace and war—at Hollywood. Surely, my dear David, if there was a breath of vitality in the British film industry it would have managed to retain this expression of the English soul in its own chantry. But no, it is bought for America as Jumbo was bought from the Zoo by Barnum."

"Oh, I'll agree in advance with your most ferocious observations on the state of British films, John. But things are beginning to look up at last. . . ."

"I've been hearing that for twenty years," John interrupted.

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"Is it a sign of revivification that a German woman who has made a successful and impressive film about a German girls' school has been invited by the imaginative impresarios responsible for the entertainment provided by British films to make a film of life at the University of Oxford? Or is such an invitation merely intended to be the cinema's contribution to the preservation of European peace? Or is it a suggestion that the undergraduates of our old University are now maidens in uniform?"

"All right, John, all right," said David. "I've already accepted in advance your jeers about British films in the past, and if you like in the present. I'm thinking about the future. Will you seriously argue that we can afford to be indifferent about the future of films in this country? Do you really believe the cinema is just an elaborate sort of mechanical toy of which people are going to get tired all of a sudden? I tell you the whole future of dramatic art is bound up with the development of that mechanical toy, and I can't understand why somebody like you with a fairly progressive mind doesn't realize that. Have you ever thought of writing an original film?"

"Yes, I was thinking of writing an original film when you were at your prep-school and thinking of choosing a racing motorist at Brooklands for your professional career. I lunched with a Mr Herbert Clarence at the Café Royal and was offered £100 for the scenario of a spy drama, and that he told me was twice as much as he'd paid any author yet. I remember he was the head of an undertaking called Clarence Century Films, with a studio at Finchley like a decrepit greenhouse."

"John, how marvellous! I'm with C.C.F. now, but I never heard of Herbert Clarence himself. Our studios are at Pinner."

"I remember Mr Clarence's advice to me as a promising young playwright was to forget all I knew about the theatre before I tried my hand at writing for the films. Instead, I made up my mind to forget all I knew about Mr Herbert Clarence. Oh, it comes back to me now. I knew of a big super-film about Joan of Arc that Pathé were making in France, and I asked Mr Clarence what he thought of the prospects for such a film about some great English historical character like Elizabeth."

"And what did he think, John?" David asked, twinkling.

"He thought that the same letters could be written after my

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costume film. And those letters were N.B.G. The public did not want costume."

"You were too early, John. You wouldn't find it quite like that now. Still, I'll admit there are plenty of prehistoric survivals in the film world even to-day. But I don't want to argue about actualities. I want to fire you with possibilities. Compare your potential film audience with your theatrical audience. Think of the comparative influence a film can have."

"And how many of that larger audience will know who is the author of the film?" John asked. "You can reel off a list of star performers. You can mention a dozen famous directors. But can you name a single author famous as the author of a famous film? Not one. Look at that preposterous catalogue of the multitudinous cooks who have spoilt the broth which is displayed before any film begins. And all that matters to the public is that Greta Garbo or Ronald Coleman is appearing in it."

"What author can you name, John, who has attempted to *be* the author of a film? It never even occurs to you to turn one of your plays into a film yourself. You are content to sell the title and your place in that preposterous catalogue to an American company for a nice fat sum, and after that to take no more interest in the whole sordid business. I'll admit the film industry has treated authors as unimportant, but they wouldn't have succeeded in reducing them to quite such a depth of unimportance if the authors themselves hadn't taken the cash and let the credit go. But look here. I didn't mean this discussion to turn into an argument about the author's position as things have been and, I know, still are to a large extent. It's the terrific future I'm thinking of. Do you really believe, John, that the theatre stands a chance against the films of the future when colour and sound have been perfected and photography has advanced beyond anything we can imagine at present? And how is the theatre going to appeal to a generation of aspiring writers without any experience of a really live drama? Damn it, John, I don't want to sound offensive, but where have you as a dramatist taken the theatre during your career? And nobody would suggest that you aren't one of our half-dozen leading dramatists."

"Leave me out of it, David. What about Bernard Shaw?"

"I don't believe a ten-year-old Bernard Shaw of to-day if he

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exists will be writing for the theatre twenty years from now. Certainly Bernard Shaw took the theatre somewhere at the end of the last century. But it was a dead end. You can say the same of Ibsen if it comes to that. As a matter of fact Shaw was more progressive than Ibsen, for some of his plays would make good films if only our thick-headed producers could see it. But you couldn't say as much of Ibsen's plays. And I'm not going to leave you out of it. If your argument about the theatre is sound, you ought to be able to assure me that you've achieved all you hoped to achieve as a dramatist. Can you say that, John?"

"What makes you think I haven't?" John parried.

"Well, John, you've written a lot of damned good plays and you've had as much popular appreciation as you wanted, but when you're dead and people read your plays, how much of you will have been handed on to the future? Not as much as you would like to hand on, I'll swear."

"Plays are written to be acted."

"Are they? Then, if that's so, the theatre is not dying but dead. And what's more, buried," David avowed.

"And do you think that if the drama directs the theatre and entrusts itself to films the film-dramatists of the future will find their works frequently revived?"

"I don't see why not. Once reproduction has been perfected."

"And they certainly won't be read," John added, "for they could not be written in readable form."

"So much the better," David retorted, "if your contention that plays are meant to be acted is a good one. The library of the future will contain all the worth-while films and students will be able to borrow a set of a man's films as nowadays they borrow a volume of his plays. And then there's music."

"Music?"

"Think what the development of the films will do for music. Before I buzz out of this old world I hope I'll have directed a super-performance of Wagner's *Ring*, putting the finest voices in the mouths of the finest actors in outward appearance, and with a super-Walt Disney to work the magic. My hat, that *will* be grand opera! But if such performances can be guaranteed, do you mean to tell me the youthful geniuses of to-morrow won't be inspired to conform accordingly? Anyway, Julius Stern thinks there's a lot in

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what I say, and he intends to encourage his boy Sebastian accordingly. I had a lot of talks with him about it in California. And Julius himself has promised to cooperate with me if I can get him a good offer from C.C.F. I wish you and he would think out something, John. I'd love to direct a joint effort by the pair of you. Do talk to him about it. He'll be here in a week or two now."

John fell into a dream. He was back in New York with Julius, walking along Broadway with him on the night of their arrival in that autumn within a month or two of twenty years ago, their heads in the air like two kids at a firework gala.

"Hullo, here's a cinema theatre. Let's sample it. If they're as far ahead of us in films as they seem to be in the other developments of urban existence we shall see something good."

And at Julius's suggestion they had passed in to find a miserable little narrow barrack with tip-up seats set too close, badly upholstered and covered with mangy plush. On the screen was a representation of wild life in Africa which was as badly lighted as a wet November afternoon at the London Zoo toward closing time. They had stayed but a few minutes when they found they could not smoke during the wobbly representation which, without even the accompaniment of a cracked piano, was unfolding itself to a sparse audience with a tick-tick of intolerable melancholy.

And then they had wandered out again into the warm night and had their first view of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Building, and had been overwhelmed by the impression of a new beauty which that concrete tower made upon them.

"New York is the first expression of a worldwide urban development, even of a new phase of humanity," Julius had avowed.

And he had agreed with him that there was indeed an exquisite sense of freedom from the past and had declared that the only atmosphere for the artist was this pulsating present.

"But we have to try to preserve this present in words or music," Julius had insisted. . "And how are we going to do that when it pulsates so strongly that all our energy is consumed in responding to it?"

We must store it up in batteries like a power engine. Let me keep the impression of this first twelve hours in New York so that when I am seventy I can touch a switch and be sitting here again with you in Madison Square, looking up at that green glowing clock and see it flash to red as it is flashing now for this superlative midnight.

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This had he said to Julius twenty years ago, and at fifty that surge of creative art was rippling away in virtuosity. A pity the cinema had seemed such a feeble toy then and a pity he had not accepted Julius's invitation on his honeymoon to come out to see a ranch at an extraordinary place called Hollywood, where imaginative young men talked of building a universal city. And Julius had added that if only they'd invent some way of synchronizing sound and action he'd be tempted to stay out in Hollywood and write film-music himself.

"Damn it, I ought to have gone," John exclaimed aloud.

"Where?" David asked.

"Hollywood."

"Well, I told you to, John."

"I mean twenty years ago with Julius. It's too late now."

"It's not too late for you and Julius to apply your great minds to films in this country," David declared firmly.

The house on the island was not large enough for John to be able to invite Julius and Leonora and their family to stay with him that summer. Moreover, so many children and such cliffs would not be a sedative combination. So in August he and Corinna went down to stay with the Sterns in a rambling old house they had taken for the summer in the heart of the Hampshire woodland. Padraig had been invited to spend his holidays in Switzerland with a school friend whose parents had a chalet near Montreux.

"John, dear John, isn't this perfectly wonderful!" exclaimed Leonora when she greeted her guests in the drawing-room of Broadbent Hall where in the sunny summer breeze the branches of the great beech at the edge of the lawn flickered in shadows upon the green-panelled walls and on the faded flowery carpet. "It's four years since we said a fond farewell in New York. Corinna, honey, how are you? Monica, here's a friend of so long ago that she's really a new friend."

Monica, dark as a gypsy, stepped shyly into prominence, and the two children greeted one another with the formal kiss of childhood. Veronica, aged nine, was a miniature of her mother, as trim as a bright-eyed canary; and Wolfgang who would be seven next November brought back memories of Sebastian at Citrano ten years ago

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when he came stepping forward to shake hands and then, his stalwart little back hunched with the effort of overcoming self-consciousness, stumped off again, hands deep in the pockets of his knickerbockers. Sebastian himself was obviously his father's son; but the stockiness was fined down by some of his mother's grace, and at seventeen he seemed less formidable than in retrospect his father had seemed at the same age.

"John, this is a great old place for moths," Julius was saying. "We went sugaring last night and there was a great turn-out of crimson underwings."

"Have you gone back to bug-hunting?" John asked.

"No, not seriously, but the country round here has kind of stirred up old memories, and I've been trying to find out how much I still knew about butterflies and moths. I tried to start Emil's boy off on it, but he didn't think much of butterflies and moths at all. And I earned a lecture from Astrid on the subject of trying to influence the young against their natural inclinations."

"Now, you're not to be naughty about Yan and Erika," said Leonora. "You disgraced us all quite enough, last week."

"Father was terribly naughty," declared Monica.

"Terribly," Veronica confirmed.

"He sure was," Wolfgang added in that deep voice of his which once again brought back Sebastian at Citrano ten years ago.

"Oh, what did Uncle Julius do, Aunt Leonora?" Corinna begged to know.

"Honeybunch, I'd just be ashamed to tell you," Leonora answered, in solemn tones belied by the merriment of her dancing eyes.

"I'll tell Corinna, Mother," Veronica volunteered with enthusiasm.

"No, dear, you won't," said her mother firmly. "We'll just make a kind little rule not to tell tales about Yan and Erika, because people who tell unkind tales with pleasure about other people are apt to forget the unkind tales that might be told about themselves."

"He put his feet on the table in Yan's place," Wolfgang just had time to reveal before he was silenced by his mother.

"Little boys who think they can do what little girls are not allowed to do," she told him, "find themselves sent up to the nursery. Now, I don't want to hear another word about Yan or Erika or

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what your father did. Is that understood?"

When presently the children had all departed to show Corinna the delights of Broadbent Hall, John asked Leonora what Julius had done to cause this sensation.

"You know this fad of poor Astrid's about never correcting children? Well, Yan was sprawling over the table and I suppose Astrid felt we were all being kind of critical and she said to Yan, 'Darling, I wouldn't sprawl right over the table like that if I was you,' and Yan said, 'Well, I want to sprawl,' and started to sprawl some more."

"And so," Julius added, "I put my foot on the table and kicked his plate out of the way. 'You can't do that,' he said. 'Can't I?' said I. 'I can do that and then some.' And I kicked over his glass into his lap. 'And you can't do that,' he said. 'Can't I?' said I. 'I can do that too, and then some.' And then I tilted his plate into his lap. And that shook the little brute. It's no use looking so disapproving, Leonora. I can't put up with those cranky notions about letting kids behave as they like, and if Astrid's sore at me that's her worry. I can live without her. And how."

"Yes, but Julius, if we're going to spend at least a whole year in England it won't be fair on your mother to worry her by a coldness between you and Emil," Leonora urged. "And it would worry her terribly."

"Leonora's right," said John. "Your mother feels very much over what she thinks is the way Emil and I are drifting further apart all the while. She kept coming back to that when she was staying with me on the island this spring."

"People must drift apart when there's a fundamental difference of belief," Julius said. "No amount of affection can survive it."

"Your mother's affection for me has survived it," John observed.

"But my mother has no strong fundamental belief. Hers is a negative attitude. She would be only too happy with a sure faith. Emil's is a positive disbelief—positive and fanatical. He regards people like you and me as a menace. He's not even a Catholic atheist like Diderot. He's the Puritan atheist. So there's a double opposition. And Astrid is another Puritan atheist. It's no use, John, we've moved to different planets, Emil and I, and we shall never be brothers again in the flesh. And you and he will never be friends. Don't let's talk about it any more."

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"John and I won't say another word," Leonora decided. "We'll leave it to you not to make your mother too much aware of the severance. Have you told John about your Polish plan?"

"I want you to come with me to Poland at the end of the month, John. I was going to take Sebastian, but I think he'd better have a holiday from me before he starts at the Royal College of Music. I'm annoyed they won't have him at Cambridge till next year."

"I had the same trouble when I wanted to go up to Oxford at seventeen. Protracted adolescence is a fetish of our education," John said. "But I'm glad Sebastian is to go to Cambridge. Within my observation I genuinely believe it is a better university to-day than my own, and I don't think it's just a disordered conservatism which makes me say that. Yes, of course I'll come with you to Poland, Julius. If you'd taken Sebastian I should have suggested taking Corinna, but I'm planning a long stay in France for her next year. And you and I can renew our youth together."

"His real object is to escape the responsibilities of age," Leonora said. "I'm to get the whole family comfortably settled in to this house we've taken in East Heath Road, establish Monica at a suitable school, and discover a governess for Veronica and Wolfgang, when the patriarch will condescend to inhabit the little world in Hampstead his Rebecca has prepared for him."

Julius grinned.

At dusk that evening when a log fire had been lighted in the faded old drawing-room and the two younger children were gone to bed, and when Sebastian and Monica were put on a sugaring expedition with their father and Corinna, Leonora spoke to John for the first time about Athene.

"She should be here, shouldn't she, to be talking with you and me about the education of small daughters? And the circle isn't complete, that circle we began to weave before the war which seemed so perfect in that Citrano summer of reunion after the war. Oh dear, one is never grateful enough to God for faith. Those poor souls who have to make sense of life on this earth and find themselves trying to put together a puzzle of which more and more of the pieces get lost as time goes on. And I'm so grateful I never had to contend with spiritualism."

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"So am I," John agreed fervidly. "If I had, I fear by now I should have no faith left. I hope it's not spiritual arrogance to say that one does seek a reasonable God whose time and space are not linked up with finite time and space by an inadequate telephone system administered by village idiots."

"Do you often wonder about immortality?" she asked.

"Do you mean if immortality is true?"

"We know it's true, John. I mean what it's like."

"I must assume that it's unimaginable by the brain which serves us on earth. Between us and the most luminous theological conception there must stand St Paul's dark glass. There would be no reason for this earthly experience otherwise. It would cease to be experience if we had perfect knowledge and assurance of an ultimate life beyond. We should none of us be effectively here at all. Life would be a boring and painful interlude like a week-end with a tiresome house-party or a sprained ankle. I believe that Athene is immortal. I believe that I am immortal. But the experience she and I shared on this small green world has happened. No ultimate reunion in eternity can . . . I was going to say compensate for . . . but that's not the word . . . can repeat that. It has happened in temporal space and time. We shall not meet again as we should have met at Southampton after being separated by finite absence and a measurable ocean. I know what will not be, dear Leonora, but I will not speculate about what will be."

"I always think religious folk are apt to lay too much stress on the fleeting nature of our earthly existence," she speculated. "I don't believe God set us down here just to hang around gently. I don't mean hang around doing nothing, but hang around doing things we didn't really like so much because it would help hereafter. I believe God meant us to love this funny old world. He seemed pretty fond of it Himself when He was here."

"Don't forget, Leonora, that you and I have been given a great deal to love it for. I shiver sometimes at the way I'm inclined to take things for granted. With all one's will not to be anthropomorphic it is difficult often not to feel that one's complacency is being deliberately tested. And yet it must be a monstrous egotism to presume that Athene died to make me more appreciative of what I had been given. I think my rejection of Protestantism was due fundamentally to its dependence on the exaggerated egotism of the

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individual in his search for God."

"John dear, I wasn't meaning to involve you in trying to answer the unanswerable. It was just that suddenly I missed Athene and there was a pang that the circle was broken and I wanted you to know I wasn't forgetting about her. And there was the silly little egotism of my own which would have liked so terribly to hear what she thought of the children. I'm rather sorry really that Julius has settled not to take Sebastian with him to Poland. I would have liked to know whether you thought he was going to do something and be somebody."

"Any forecasts of mine about the career of a musician could not have the slightest value, Leonora."

"I expect Julius was right," she said pensively.

"Over what?"

"In not letting Sebastian appear on the concert platform as a child pianist." She sighed. "All the same I would have loved to sit in the front row and enjoy being his mother. But Julius has great hopes for him as a composer. He doesn't say much even to me. But I know he has. He's a little disappointed with himself, you know. He doesn't feel that he has composed the music of which once he dreamed. He's pinning his hopes more and more over to Sebastian. He said to me the other day how glad he was that Sebastian often seemed so stupid. 'We're cursed by excess of brain in these days,' he said to me. 'And Sebastian is really splendidly dull.' I was a little peeved with him, but he insisted that nearly all the great composers have been stupid, apart from their music. Do you agree with that, John?"

"I've never known a composer of unquestionable magnitude, but I'm sure Julius wouldn't make such a statement unless he felt he was justified by facts. He has a profound respect for facts. But I'm not surprised he stood out against Sebastian's taking to the concert platform in childhood. I know he's always been inclined to think he was too much at the mercy of other people's music in youth and that being so provided him with accomplishment at the expense of originality. I really can't theorize about music, I've no basis beyond the gratification of my own enjoyment on which to build an aesthetic judgment."

"And now tell me about Corinna," said Leonora. "How is the education going? You're still determined she shan't go to school?"

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"Firmly, and all the more firmly since Athene is not here. Were she still alive I might not dread so much the effect upon Corinna of an alien society—which indeed to me is really a savage society, so much does school impede all true education and re-ain its victims in the mental condition of an earlier stage of human development.—Yes, if Athene were alive the gulf between myself and a schoolgirl daughter might be bridged. But as things are I do not intend to risk the effect of that gulf."

"Has she shown a sign yet of any particular interest?"

"She aspires to fly."

"Is that so, John?" Leonora exclaimed with a faint suggestion of dismay. "And do you approve?"

"I'm not going to discourage her. In fact I'm proposing to give her her first flight—and myself incidentally—next year. I'd a great deal sooner she aspired to fly than to play full back at hockey for one of those ineffable agglomerations of girlhood like Roedean."

"Well, I don't know a great deal about British girl-schools, but I'm entrusting Monica to one."

"You're sending her to a day-school, and that's not such a dangerous experiment. She won't be enclosed in a barbarian prison."

"John," Leonora laughed, "you wouldn't call a good convent school a barbarian prison?"

"I don't believe convent schools are better than others except for teaching their pupils better manners. If I did send her to school I'd send her to a council school and teach her manners myself."

"But, John, if Corinna had been Corin would you have sent him to a council school, which I suppose is what we call a public school in America?"

"Probably not. I was faced with another aspect of that decision over my friend Edward Fitzgerald's boy. And in the end I surrendered to convention. But I don't think the comparison between male and female education is sound. There is still a tradition behind male education in this country which at its best as at a school like Eton or Winchester does bestow at any rate the externals of civilization upon its alumni. I have yet to meet any woman bearing such a mark as the result of a girls' school. I have observed many disadvantages from girls' schools: I have observed no ad-

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vantages. I don't see why we should expect any advantage to accrue from an institution with nothing to inspire its foundation except an itch to prove that women will be the equals of men if they are allowed to enjoy the superficialities of a masculine education. The only logical educational progress toward an equality of the sexes is co-education, but in England at any rate that is still at the mercy of faddists except in its simplest form, and I'm not yet much impressed by its beneficial effect in Scotland. I've no doubt that gradually a system of education will be evolved which really will teach humanity to make good use of its available knowledge, which will aim at the beginning of wisdom rather than an outline of information; but at present education is either in too much of an empirical muddle or too much at the mercy of old-fashioned shibboleths. I want Corinna to be truly classless. I can't make her that by sending her to any kind of school I know of, and so I must teach her myself. And if at the end of it she makes a mess of her life I may blame my own inadequacy as a token, but I shall never suppose the mess might have been avoided by sending her to a convent school or any other kind of a mould for young females."

"What does Prudence think about your theories?"

"Prudence longed to go to school and when finally she prevailed on her mother to let her go she hated it," John said. "And hers was a day-school."

"Still, she's a pretty good testimonial to school," Leonora argued.

"I don't attribute any of her virtues to her school, for which the best that can be said is that it managed not to do her any harm."

"I can't argue with you, John, because I don't really know anything at all about British schools. I've a kind of notion you're begging the question, but it certainly is lots of fun to be talking to you again, so who cares about logic?"

At this moment Julius came in with a female oak-egg he had netted along the herbaceous border searching for honey in the tobacco plants.

"I care about logic," he declared. "It is philosophy's music. What were you discussing?"

"The education of young females," said John.

"Wait, my boy, till to-morrow when this winged lady I have here is put down in a box by the edge of the wood. You'll see all the male oak-eggars in Hampshire for miles around tumbling over

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one another to secure an interview. The education of young females? It's a waste of time."

John was following a porter on his way across the grimy inferno of Liverpool Street thronged with holiday-makers toward a taxi. He had left Corinna at Erpingham and to-morrow he and Julius were sailing from the Thames on their Polish excursion. Suddenly he heard his name called and looking round saw Turner Rigden.

"John! I haven't seen you for ages, old man. Where have you been all this time?"

"Where have *you* been?" John retorted.

"Look here, what are you doing to-night?" Rigden asked eagerly.

"Staying at my club. I'm going to Poland to-morrow."

"Can you put in a night with us? It's Dorothy's birthday. She's sixty. It'll be a grand birthday present for her to have you with us. We're living at Woodford. I'll be going to town to-morrow morning. We can go up together."

And presently the two of them were in a third-class smoking-carriage of a suburban train, the mean streets of the East End stretching on either side of the railway line. At this hour of the afternoon in the holiday season they were the only occupants.

"I suppose you're wondering what's making me travel third-class?" Rigden asked as he filled a pipe.

"I wasn't, as a matter of fact," John replied. "But if you want to tell me, Turner, go ahead."

"Just the same old John," the spruce little man commented, his aggressive blue eyes puckering in a grin.

Yes, he was still spruce, John was thinking. The tie was faded, but it was fastened as neatly as it used to be when it served as a cushion to set off a big pearl pin. The boots if old were as well polished as ever. The once golden-brown little moustache might be grey, but it was well trimmed.

"I've been living up in my island for the best part of the last two years," John said. There had been no criticism implied in Rigden's last observation, but somehow it had made him feel guilty of letting an old friendship break its moorings.

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"And how's the wife?" Rigden asked.

"Athene died a year ago last April."

"My God, old man, I'm sorry. My god, that shows we've lost touch. Well, when I crashed I didn't feel like hanging around with the old gang. I made a clean cut. I've got a job which brings me in as much as a clerk, and if I'm worth a clerk's pay at sixty-six that's something I needn't feel ashamed of. And don't forget, John, I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I'm better off at sixty-six than I was at sixteen when I ran away from Tiverton and started on my own in Canada. And, do you know, John, I believe Dorothy's happier now than she was when we had Wickets."

"And Achnalochlannach?"

"Well, she did like that. So did the girls. But it always gave me the willies."

"And who has Wickets now?" John asked.

"That bastard Trollope."

"The great T. T."

"Do you remember the billiard-table at Wickets?"

"With the mauve cloth?"

"That's right," Rigden chuckled. "Well, that fool architect was always searching for something to match something else. He's got it now. T. T.'s face looks like a bottle of bad port, and he can spill it over that billiard-table. I was riled at first when he bought Wickets—and you may lay the sunnavabitch got it cheap—because he did more than any of them to stymie my credit, but now I don't give a damn. Not a blinking damn, John. Why should I? I was cured of minding this time last year when T. T. and the rest of that crew of pirates they call bankers made the whole country walk the plank. The only thing I regretted was that I'd had to chuck Parliament the year before and couldn't vote once with those poor boobs of a Labour Government who'd been taken for a ride."

"But, Turner, if you hadn't lost all your money in 1930, would you have still voted against your party in 1931? You were member for South-East Kensington for a long time without quarrelling with the Central Office."

"I know I was. They damn near persuaded me to fork out for a baronetcy. A baronetcy! By jiggs, some baronet I would be

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now! Selling . . .” The little man stopped. “John, I’m fond of you, and God, I was glad to see your old face at Liverpool Street, but I’m not going to tell you what I’m selling now.”

“Don’t worry. I shan’t ask you to,” said John with a smile.

“And I wouldn’t have been able to sell that baronetcy back to the b——rs. No, sir, I’d have been Sir Turner Rigden, Bart. of Wickets, even if my corpse couldn’t pay for a cardboard coffin. John, I really am glad we ran into one another,” he exclaimed, leaning over to pat his friend’s knee affectionately. “It’s going to be a grand birthday treat for Dorothy. She’s sixty to-day, and my God, we’ve been married forty years. She won’t eat off the Duke of Salop’s gold plate for her golden wedding. Do you remember that gold plate, John?”

“Very well. It always made me think of eating sardines out of the tin.”

“Gee, I must remember to tell Dorothy that one. She hated that gold plate. But, John, I’m awfully sorry to hear about your loss. I never got to know Athene really well, but I always admired her. And how’s Erpingham and your sister? And David, what’s he doing? Still in films, eh? Well, that’s about the only way of getting rid of money I haven’t tried.”

“David’s optimistic about the future for films.”

“I was optimistic about the future for a lot of things ten years ago. Nowadays all I’m optimistic about is that I may be able to get out of this world before it’s in the biggest mess it ever has been in.”

“Not another war, Turner?”

“War or no war, the world will be in one H.O.B. mess. We had our chance in 1920 and the money power wrecked it. Look at the mess the U.S.A. is in now. Why? The money power.”

“Well, I’ll say this for you, Turner. You didn’t wait till you’d lost all your money before you became critical of it. I remember you and Trollope getting quite savage with one another that hot October day when the unemployed did a little mild—very mild—rioting. And at the time of the General Strike you always maintained the Labour leaders had been tricked into it by Baldwin.”

“So they were. And now he’s tricked Ramsay MacDonald again.”

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"You think he has?"

"Think he has! There's no think about it. Stanley is the farmer. Ramsay is the farmer's scarecrow. Winston *was* the farmer's boy. Now it's Tony Eden."

"You oughtn't to be so severe on Baldwin," John said. "You were always a great advocate of colonial preference and look at the success he's just had at this Ottawa Conference, which *I* should suppose made another European war a certainty."

"There's nothing wrong with preference except that it's too late. The country should have listened to Joe Chamberlain. That was the time to put the Empire on a sound basis. However, better late than never, I suppose."

"Even at the cost of another European war?"

"Oh, I don't believe there'll be another European war for a long time yet," Rigden declared.

"Unless it's the only way out of the financial and economic mess you're considering inevitable."

"Ah well, John, it's no use listening to me. I'm out of politics now. I'm in . . ." and again he stopped and his aggressive blue eyes puckered in a grin. "My God, I nearly let it out that time," he exclaimed.

"I know you're longing for me to be inquisitive," said John, "but I won't gratify you."

"Damn it, John, I will tell you. I'm working with a new laxative, and by jiggs, old man, it really is a good one. I've never had any use for that kind of dope myself. Never needed it. . . ."

"You wouldn't have lost your money if you had," John interposed. "The costive do not part with their gains more easily than with anything else."

"But this laxative is really good, John. Timely Tablets we call them, and the slogan is Regular as Clockwork."

"Are you the proprietor?"

"No, I'm in on a commission basis at present as sales manager, but if only I can raise the cash for a big advertising campaign I'll get in on the ground floor with a share in the business. I don't suppose I ever will. But what's that matter? It gives me something to think about on the way home every evening."

The Rigden home was the last of a terrace of small semi-detached houses like one of thousands.

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"See what I've called it?" the owner asked triumphantly. John read on the gate of 42 Opal Terrace *The Stump*.

"And once I was the owner of Wickets," Rigden chuckled as he led the way into the minute front garden full of marguerites. "Dorothy!" he shouted in the hall. "Where are you? I've brought a visitor." Mrs Rigden appeared from the sitting-room.

"John Ogilvie!" she exclaimed, beaming. "Well, what a nice surprise!"

"He's going to spend the night with us to celebrate your sixtieth birthday, old lady," Turner announced. "Where are the girls? Will he have Madge's room or Dolly's?"

"I'm not going to apologize for being a nuisance," said John. "I'm too pleased to see you for apologies, and anyway Turner kidnapped me at Liverpool Street. I'd been depositing my small daughter with my sister Prudence preparatory to departing for Poland to-morrow afternoon."

"Yes, I remember you were always interested in Poland, John," said Mrs Rigden.

"Look here, Dorothy," her husband asked, "will you keep John amused for half an hour? I'm going to do a bit of shopping. Where *are* the girls?"

"They've gone to watch the tennis tournament. We can settle about John's room later," she told him.

Presently after a whispered colloquy with Turner in the hall she and John were alone together in the little front sitting-room.

"Nothing left," she murmured, shaking her head as she saw John glancing round the walls. "And it's better that way," she added. "Then there's nothing to remind one of other things that are gone. John, I'm so sorry to hear of your own sad loss. We'd heard nothing."

"I feel badly about not having kept in touch," said John. "But I've buried myself on the island for the last two years."

"Dear old Scotland," she sighed. "That's the only thing I really do miss. I did love Achnalochlannach. I did feel parting with that. And so did Madge and Dolly. But Turner never really cared for it. And yet, you know, John, he's settled down wonderfully here. I've never once heard him complain about what's happened. I do think that's rather wonderful, don't you? Oh yes, and he's full of optimism over what's going to happen presently."

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You'd think we were just married to hear him on plans for the future."

"He told me what his present occupation was," said John.

"He did? Well, that does show how glad he was to meet you again, John. He never tells any of his old friends what he's doing now. It's not snobbishness. Because Turner isn't a bit snobbish. But I think he feels it's a little *infra dig.* being on a commission. I think if he owned those tablets he'd be ramming them down all his friends' throats. I'm talking as if we were still surrounded by friends, but as a matter of fact we hardly see anybody these days. And then only one or two people Turner's made friends with in the train going to business. But I really don't mind. I got very tired of all those people with money. They were too heartless for me. I'm really happier as we are. That's not sour grapes, John. It's the truth."

"I can easily believe it. If you do have just enough."

"Oh, there have been difficult moments. Well, naturally, you can't have a financial crash like Turner's without a few difficult moments. But Turner's still such a boy. And though I'm six years younger than him I sometimes feel like his mother. And we were married in 1892. It's hardly credible when I think of it. Madge is thirty-seven. I do wish sometimes that she and Dolly had got married, because though Turner doesn't say much about it I know he's worried about what would happen if anything happened to him. We should have this little house. He had just enough left to buy that. It's always something to feel one would have a roof over one's head. And Dolly has learnt typewriting and shorthand. She's not very good at shorthand yet. Madge tried, but she couldn't manage it at all. They were well educated, too. Too well educated really. I think it's a mistake all this education of girls. It's such a handicap if they have to earn their own living."

John smiled.

"You're laughing at me. Well, I suppose it does sound rather a silly remark. But what good is it to know who came to the throne in the year dot when your father has lost all his money? It is nice to see you, John. I always used to ramble on to you. You never used to seem to be pricing everything I'd got on."

So Dorothy Rigden rambled on until Turner and her two

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daughters came in, when she departed to the kitchen to cook her own birthday dinner.

"It had to be champagne when John became one of the party," Rigden told his wife when they all sat down to table and she exclaimed at such prodigality. "God knows what it will be like. I got it at the Antelope. I never heard of the kind before. It's probably gooseberry." He sipped it. "It's not so bad. Or else it's so long since I tasted champagne. Well, old lady, many happy returns of the day. Here, the fizz isn't so good as all that. It won't stand being watered."

"I can't help crying, Turner. I'm sorry. It's not because I'm feeling sad. It's really because you're so cheerful and that makes me feel happy."

That night John sat up talking with his host after Mrs Rigden and her daughters had gone to bed.

"Well, my God, John, it's been a great evening. A real cracker. I haven't enjoyed myself so much since I had my crash. You were always lucky to me. And I believe you're going to be lucky again."

"Look here, Turner, how much would it cost to buy up this laxative of yours?" John asked.

"Forget it, John. More than you can afford with your savings, even if I was willing to risk them, which I'm not. Maybe I'll get back into the big money. Maybe I won't. When I said I believed you were going to be lucky again I wasn't meaning I hoped to put my hand into your pocket."

"I could invest up to £5000," John persisted.

"Look here, old man, what I lost was my own money. I'm not going to start in now losing money for my pals."

"But you're confident something could be made of this business."

"Blast it, John, there have been a hell of a lot of businesses I've been confident I could make something of since I landed at Montreal fifty years ago. And I wasn't always right. If you were a business man, John, and you said to me, 'Turner, I want to be in on these tablets. They look like forty per cent to me,' I'd take your money. But you're not a business man, John. You're a warm-hearted pal, and that's as near to a business man as the equator to the north pole. I took a shine to you, old man, the first time we met and you gave me an option on *All or Nothing*. And by jiggs, the going was good while it lasted. I had lots of fun. A hell of a lot more fun than

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most poor devils get out of life. And if I was Sir Turner Rigden, Bart. of Wickets, maybe I'd have to be buying Timely Tablets now instead of selling them. As it is, the only time I ever took a laxative in my life was when I tried biting a cultured pearl and swallowed the little b——r by mistake. Take my word for it, John, poverty's better exercise than golf."

"Well, I won't argue with you," said John. "But if you ever thought I could help, it wouldn't be fair on an old friendship not to give that old friendship a chance."

And this injunction he put in writing to be enclosed with the dozen bottles of champagne, the three bottles of brandy, and the three boxes of cigars he sent to his old friend. To Dorothy Rigden he sent a radio set. He had been lucky enough to hear her say to Madge that she wished they had one, when there was a doubt about the accuracy of the alarm-clock in the kitchen.

The ship on which John and Julius sailed from a wharf south of the river was a Polish merchantman with accommodation for about a dozen passengers.

"What a fantastic vision this would have seemed when you and I and Emil and my mother set out to Cracow in the first August of this century," Julius commented. He was looking at the red-and-white Polish ensign fluttering from the stern of the grey ship in the light breeze. "No wonder the Poles get excited about themselves, John. Not every nation is granted the grace of a Divine miracle. I wonder whether Prussia or Russia is the Devil's favourite."

"Prussia without a doubt," said John.

"The Poles themselves don't feel so sure about it," Julius pointed out. "But what a miracle, what a miracle!"

The *Bydgoszcz* was passing a solid old Dickensian counting-house in Deptford in a window of which a clerk was gazing riverwards to watch the vessel pass.

"And Poland seemed already long dead when that house was being built," John commented.

Dusk was deepening over the Thames estuary when they went below to dine, and when they came up on deck for dinner on the following evening the estuary of the Elbe was dark, with the lights of Hamburg a tawny blur upon the eastern sky.

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At Kiel next day the *Bydgoszcz* lay for several hours alongside a dreary wharf. Julius and John were unanimous in declining the steward's offer to obtain permission from the harbour authorities to go ashore. Instead they leaned over the rail, eyeing Kiel and its inhabitants with a completely satisfied emotion of profound dislike.

"Nothing detracts from one's sense of disgust," John declared at last.

"Nothing," Julius agreed.

"The buildings are mean," said John.

"The people are meaner," Julius added.

"The sky is the dirtiest grey I ever saw," said John.

"It's the colour of the nation's soul," Julius added.

"What a pity it is that so many people get their first impression of Germany by way of the Rhine. The Lorelei puts her arms round them, croons a song of Schubert in their ears, fills their glasses with hock, and the legend of the good Germans is perpetuated," said John.

"Nice kind Germans who always give the traveller clean sheets and never overcharge him," Julius added.

"Excuse me, please, you think the Germans are nice kind people?" a fair-haired Polish girl asked in evident amazement at such an opinion. "Please to excuse my bad manners, but I could not help hearing what you have said," she went on, blushing now at her own boldness.

John smiled.

"My friend was speaking ironically, mademoiselle," he assured her.

"I do not understand very well. Please to excuse my English. It is not at all good. I am there only two months making my studies."

"He meant exactly the reverse. He dislikes the Germans extremely. We had both of us been gloating over the beastliness of Kiel."

"You speak very difficult English for me," she said, shaking her head. "What is 'gloat', please?"

John explained.

"I am so very pleased to hear that word," she declared. "I think it is not at all a word which everybody who studies English will have." She repeated it to herself, giving the broad vowel

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sound full value. "It is certainly a word I must not forget. I would gloat very much if I could see all Germans dead. I make a good use of the word so, yes?"

"An admirable one," Julius assured her.

"And you go now to my country?" she asked.

"Not for the first time, *pani*," he said.

"Ah, you have been already in Poland?" she exclaimed.

"And so you like it, I think, yes?" she pressed eagerly.

Julius did not answer, and her face fell.

"My friend likes it so much, mademoiselle," John intervened, "that he cannot find words to express what Poland means to him. And it means a great deal to me too."

"Oh, I am so glad," she cried, clapping her hands in rapture, and blushing again, this time with pleasure. And she begged for their names. "I am Wanda Kiernowska. My father is professor in the Cracow University. But before Poland was free we have been living in Poznan and so it is why I have asked you the reason to think Germans are nice kind peoples. Nobody can know the Germans when he has not suffered underneath them."

"And what did you think of the English?" John asked.

"Everybody has been so kind to me. It is only I find it sad that so many English peoples think my country is a new country. It is not strange Mr Lloyd George cannot understand about Poland if he thinks it is a new country."

"Most British politicians are badly educated," John assured her.

"But how can peoples be politicians without education?" the fair girl asked in astonishment.

"They're not absolutely illiterate," Julius explained. "They can just read and write."

"Oh, please, I hope so. To be a politician without reading or writing. What a horror!"

They talked with Wanda Kiernowska till the *Bydgoszcz* finished taking in the small cargo she was loading at Kiel, and engaged themselves to have tea with her that afternoon. However, the Baltic was unpleasantly agitated, and Wanda Kiernowska remained in her cabin. So they did not see her again till early next morning when entering the harbour of Gdynia.

"Perhaps when you come to Cracow," she suggested, "you will come to see my father. He would like to meet you so much, and

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I hope, please, that you will come. When I have been very sick in the night I am gloating. You know why? Because there is a German woman in the cabin who is more sick than me. Good-bye, and we meet in Cracow, please, yes?"

The inhabitants of Gdynia seemed to exist in a state of perpetual astonishment at being there. They were like the people of a city conjured into abrupt existence by sorcery, and liable to dissolve at the whim of the magician responsible for their being. A few years ago Gdynia had been a cluster of fishermen's huts beside the barren shores of the Gulf of Danzig. Now it was the port of Poland and rapidly developing into a rival of the Free City itself, which might have been the port of Poland but for the foolish compromise at Versailles when the Polish Corridor was put on the map of Europe to be regarded not as a wrong to Poland but as a wrong to Germany, because the barbarians of East Prussia could reach the barbarians of West Prussia only in a train as carefully sealed as a waggon of explosives.

Docks, warehouses, wharves, boulevards, shops, hotels, apartment houses, railway station—all was neat, gay, trim, and new, but all was slightly unreal, like the buildings of an exhibition intended to last no more than a year. The flowers in the public gardens had a paper look and the young trees planted along the boulevards a doll's-house air. The big shops did not seem to offer articles actually for sale, but to be stocked with imitation goods for children to play at buying and selling to one another.

For the most part the streets and boulevards of the new town were built over an area as level as a nursery floor: but there was one irregularity, a grassy mound on the top of which a great wooden cross proclaimed that this was the site of the future cathedral of Gdynia.

"That Calvary is the first thing I've seen in this uncanny toy-town of a place which suggests reality," Julius observed.

"Do you think Gdynia is any more unreal than the latest garden suburb north of London?" John asked. "Or anywhere else? I fancy we're going to see a development of this sort of building all over the world."

"Till it gets kicked to pieces by another war," Julius muttered.

John nodded reflectively.

"So long as humanity continues to indulge itself in this passion

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for packing itself into cities," he said, "that's a perpetual menace under which it must live. And how terribly easy it would be to kick this jolly little place to pieces."

"Yes, but people content to accept this as a permanent existence will build it up again just as easily," Julius pointed out.

"My God, what a period in which to presume to aim at creative art!"

"It seemed inspiring when you and I enjoyed our first impression of New York together just twenty years ago almost to a day," John reminded him.

"Yes, it did, didn't it? What has turned sour on us?"

"Perhaps it was the war."

"I wasn't in the war. That trite excuse won't do for me," Julius said.

"You weren't playing an active part in the war. But you were living in it. You were at the mercy of a mood which held humanity in thrall for practically five years. I don't think the imagination can stand up indefinitely to the overmastering evidence of its own impotence. I've told you before that I've never recovered as a dramatist from three years of performing in better plays than I could ever have invented."

"That wouldn't affect a musician."

"Well, of course it's idle for me to attempt to speculate upon the conditions favourable to the creation of great music," said John.

"It's no use looking to war to excuse the failure of our period to produce supreme artists," Julius exclaimed, "when the greatest composer of all was writing his best work at a time when Europe was as much at the mercy of war as we ever were and for much longer. The only composer of our time marked with authentic greatness is Sibelius. I suppose the drive there is the rebirth of his nation. And there was a good deal of that, you know, behind Beethoven. I believe he was genuinely inspired by his dream of what the German nation might effect for humanity. And the English were to share in that mission. They were to march together for the betterment of humanity to the tune that winds up the Choral Symphony. It's not surprising that a German like Brahms should regard with horror and rage the influence of a German like Wagner, who incidentally was probably half a Jew, as I gather this unpleasant creature Hitler is also. Not that

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Brahms wasn't an extremely typical expression of that German arrogance which is eternally wondering if the arrogance is justified. Beethoven was sure enough of the German destiny to want the English to share it. Brahms hated the English. They probably gave him a feeling of provincial inferiority. Still the old boy was a respectable enough German to feel pretty worried where Wagner was going to take them. Strange phenomenon, Brahms. There really was no good reason to expect a supremely great composer to be functioning at full blast in the second half of the nineteenth century. If it could be done then, why the deuce can't it be done now?"

"If national rebirth is the explanation of Sibelius's greatness," John asked, "what is Poland doing?"

"Gdynia," Julius replied with a grin. "And they are so proud of it. It's no use, John, this is a bad, bad period for a creative artist."

"I much doubt if there'll ever be another good one," John replied. "I think you and I must take to the movies."

"Too late. We missed our opportunity."

"That's what I told David. But clearly, Julius, when you look at a place like Gdynia you can't help realizing that great art in terms of the past is finished."

"Of course it is. I don't want to look at Gdynia to realize that," said Julius scornfully.

John sighed.

"Why so much depression over the obvious?" the other asked.

"I wasn't thinking about art. I was thinking about politics. I was wondering whether it was worth while agitating for what we used to call self-determination merely to produce Gdynias; and of its kind Gdynia is very good. They've not made anything as good in Ireland yet. In a Woolworth world why bother about ancient liberties? The only freedom people cherish now is the ability to buy with the minimum of trouble in the cheapest market."

Late that afternoon they left Gdynia for Warsaw. It was as the train stopped outside the station of Danzig that John noticed a small swastika painted on a fence at the bottom of a weed-foul garden which ran down to the edge of the railway embankment. It was one of a number of such gardens attached to a terrace of gaunt scabrous houses that stood up stark against a faded blue sky. He

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and Julius were alone in the couchette compartment upholstered in dusty deep-crimson plush.

"Curiously like a tarantula," he commented. "There's something rather frightening about it. I don't think I really believed it till now."

"Believed what?"

"Believed the swastika was being used seriously as an emblem again. I thought of it merely as a good-luck charm. My god, Julius, it *is* definitely evil, isn't it? I wonder if these National Socialists in Germany will ever get into full power. They made a great advance at the end of July."

"I'm positive they'll get into full power," Julius said. "And when they do they'll be pretty unpleasant."

"They're anti-communist anyway," John said hopefully.

"Yes, as anti-Christians they're anti-communist in the same way as Christian Protestants are anti-Catholic."

John gazed at the little black swastika painted on the rotting board of the fence.

"It really is an expression of absolute evil," he ejaculated. "It's almost eerie to imagine the miserable Teuton barbarian sneaking along behind that fence to paint his token on it the way a scarred mangy starved tom-cat will squirt his rank civet to assert his hold on life and his claim to notice."

"I'd like to tell you you're talking bosh, John, because it's a surrender of human dignity to let that dirty little bit of ape-play upon one's superstitious fears, but it's true, it has some kind of Voodoo potency to disquiet one."

"I remember years and years ago we had a burglary at Hampstead," John said. "My father was away, and it was my job as master of the house—I was fourteen at the time—to examine the violated dining-room into which the thieves had broken before reporting to the police-station in Belsize Park. One of the burglars had indulged in sir-reverence on the Persian carpet. The detective-sergeant who took charge of the investigations told me that such a gesture was regularly indulged in by burglars for luck. It gave me a squeamish feeling at the time, and I get the same squeamish feeling from that painted swastika. It has the effect of some ignoble excretion."

The train moved on again while John was speaking. The

painted swastika was left behind. There was a view of a more dignified and more ancient Danzig than had been suggested by that terrace of scabrous houses above the railway embankment. Yet for John and Julius the whole place was befouled by that dark emblem which seemed to express an inherent evil in those mediaeval houses with their many-windowed Gothic roofs, as if the Free City was preparing for a witches' Sabbath.

"The air here is poisonous," Julius exclaimed. "We were patronizing about Gdynia, but at least it was clean. This Free City is a midden. Those damned idiots round the table at Versailles! Why didn't they give Danzig back to Poland? To leave Germans here must mean ultimate disaster."

Next morning they reached Warsaw and stayed at the Europejski Hotel. John's bedroom was large and old-fashioned with a profusion of elaborate upholstery and thick heavy curtains suggesting the luxury of the mid-nineteenth century. One could almost fancy that from its windows some Russian general had watched the massacre of unarmed Polish citizens in 1863. Yet there was also in the atmosphere of this room a sort of overwhelming femininity such as once used to escape from the opening of a mahogany wardrobe. This seemed such a room as that in which Anna Karenina had surrendered to Vronsky's passion. It was such a sofa as this from which she sank, and it would have been on just such another carpet on which she would have fallen if he had not held her.

"Much improved by blowing up the Orthodox Cathedral which used to fill up the Square like a many-breasted elephant on its back," Julius observed from the window of this old-fashioned bedroom that was in such contrast to the modernized marble-iced ground floor of the hotel. "I haven't been to Warsaw since February 1922."

"When you were with your mother," said John.

"Yes, I played the Tchaikovsky Concerto and conducted my own Second Symphony. I've written three symphonies since then, but none is as good as the Second. What is it that forbids progress to the contemporary composer?" Julius exclaimed. "There was in my Second Symphony the inspiration to express in music that Assumption of 1920 when the Russian armies almost at the gates of Warsaw were turned back, and Europe was saved. If I had lived in Poland during the last ten years instead of the States would

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my Third and Fourth and Fifth Symphonies have come nearer to greatness? But no, no, no, music must be independent of one's external circumstances. Of all the arts music must be granted that. It's strange that the Germans should have produced the largest body of the greatest music. I suppose it is the expression of the thwarted soul of Germany. No other nation has aspired to do so much and has achieved so little. It's strange too that all the greatest music of the world has been produced by inland nations."

"And all the greatest poetry by maritime nations," John added.

"And when a maritime nation does produce music," Julius continued, "it attaches its music to another form of expression, as for instance to the dance in Spain and in Italy to opera."

"Poland is an inland nation," John pointed out, "but it hasn't produced much great music."

"I don't think Poland was thwarted. It was oppressed by what it regarded as barbarians on either side of it—the Russians and the Prussians. It never felt itself off the mainstream of western culture and civilization. The resentment of being overrun by what were felt to be two inferior breeds of humanity found expression in poetry. Italy's resentment against German—and I include the Austrians with the Germans—against German exploitation could also find sufficient expression in poetry. There seems to be a perpetual dualism in the German and the Russian soul which poetry can neither express nor allay. This is particularly true of the German soul, and the body of great German music is far beyond the body of great Russian music both in volume and achievement."

"I suppose you would count yourself Jewish if you had to ascribe nationality to your music, wouldn't you?" John asked.

"Yes, and there's no doubt that as creative musicians, the Jews have never excelled as they have excelled as interpretative musicians. It's significant too that Jews have also excelled as actors."

"How do you explain that?"

"I think probably because for so long now the Jews have been parasitic upon other nations. The interpretative artist is in his way parasitic upon creative art. The actor's art has rightly been regarded as low in the scale and the actor himself viewed with suspicion and often with contempt. I think myself the singer and the instrumentalist should be viewed in the same light. The interpretative musician receives greater respect only because the art he

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interprets is enveloped in a deeper mystery of creation than that which the actor communicates to an audience. John, would you allow to any actor the ability to add anything to what you have written?"

"Nothing exasperates me more than such a claim," John replied. "And I regard the dramatist who flatters some wretched actress by letting her suppose that his creative achievement was incomplete without her as a menace to the relationship between creation and interpretation." John stopped for a moment. He was thinking of Gabrielle Derozier's interpretation of Annette, his first heroine. "Perhaps I should qualify that by saying in almost every instance. There may be a very few exceptions. Certainly a bad actor can spoil a good part, whereas a good actor cannot make a really bad part good, though he might make it theatrically effective. You wouldn't admit that a conductor could add anything to the stature of a symphony by his handling of it?"

"Most emphatically no," Julius averred. "Nevertheless it would not follow that a composer was the best conductor of his own work. He might know what he wanted, but he might not be able to extract it from his orchestra. Elgar was a case in point."

"Just as obviously a dramatist might not be able to give the ideal performance of his play," John said. "Don't you think that the amount of conducting and playing you have done of other people's works may have tended to exhaust your own creativeness?"

"I think it has. That's one of the reasons why I refused to let Sebastian appear on the concert platform and why I've forbidden him to play at all while he's studying at the Royal College of Music. I have hopes he will become a composer of some magnitude. It so often happens in musical genealogy that the second-rate musician produces the first-rate musician. By the way, it's significant that the Germans who are the most essentially masculine nation in the world should also have produced the greatest music."

"Yes, music is very much a male art," John agreed. "Of course, all art in its higher manifestations is a masculine prerogative, but music most of all. I wonder if the emancipation of women will turn them into genuinely creative artists."

Julius shook his head.

"By the time the revolution in the status of women has begun to influence fundamentally their mental and emotional processes art

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will probably be an outlived expression of the human mind's activity."

"David believes in the future of the cinema," John reminded his friend.

"So do I, but it will be a composite expression of the creative impulse."

"Like the cathedrals of the middle ages," John suggested.

"If it comes to that, like the Iliad of Homer or the Psalms of David," Julius added.

"But unfortunately not quite like," John suggested with a smile. "I cannot imagine films of the quality of the Iliad or the Psalms."

They lunched that day at a tavern in a square in the old part of the city where the houses were tall and narrow and brightly painted, with carved fronts and steep roofs in which dormer after dormer hinted at the strange romantic interiors of remote rooms. The tavern itself was ancient and the Gothic interior was heavy with an immemorial vinosity. Here they drank deeply of a wine fortified with honey after several preliminary vodkas.

"Are you Faust, Julius, and am I Mephistopheles? Or are you Mephistopheles and am I Faust?"

"John, you're getting drunk."

"You can drop that frequentative participle . . . if that's what I mean, Julius. So far as I am concerned you can discard all periphrases, circumlocutions, ambages *et hoc genus omne*. You can take your stand—if indeed you are capable of standing—you can take your stand, I repeat, upon the present indicative. In fact, you can say that I am drunk. Nobody, not even I, will contradict you. And if you yourself are still hampered by the frequentative participle and so still slightly sober, drink more of this hippocras or mead or hydromel or whatever it is we are drinking and join me in the *sanctum sanctorum* of time—the present. We wasted a lot of time this morning . . . if it was this morning . . . in talking about the future. I take a very gloomy view of the European future and when that future is the present indicative I hope you'll give me the credit of having warned you about it. Do fill your glass and drink up. I can't hang about indefinitely, waiting for you to shake off that slight sobriety which stands between you and the truth. It's a great pity you didn't bring your violin with you to Warsaw. I feel you are on the verge of eloquence. There are too many people

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in Warsaw inclined to think that Russia is more dangerous than Prussia. And with your violin you might have been able to check that notion."

"You're very drunk, John," Julius grinned.

"Not really, my dear old Carian guest. I am merely enjoying quite enormously revisiting the glimpses of the moon. You've been to Poland since Poland was herself again. I haven't. This honied wine is not so potent as that thought. Gdynia was . . . not a disappointment exactly . . . but it seemed so impermanent. It was too much of an exhibition. Here in Warsaw one hears the heart of a people beating. And we shall hear it in Cracow. Of that I am sure. But Gdynia seemed so brittle—just waiting to be kicked to pieces."

"That was merely the superficial effect of contemporary architecture," Julius said. "Warsaw may seem more solid, but it is no more secure. And miracles are not usually repeated."

"You think the Russians still hanker after it?"

"Who was preaching just now about the present?"

"I know," said John. "But that's the infernal part of this age to which our brief mortality has been allotted. None of us can make the most of the present. We are all of us entangled in the future. It's that foul swastika which haunts me, Julius. That on top of the impression Kiel made. It is the fancy of those grey people in Kiel being galvanized by the poison of that black emblem of evil. When just now in the exuberance of this hippocras I asked which of us two was Faust, what I was really speculating was whether Poland was Faust and whether presently the Devil would offer his bargain. This aspect of Warsaw is very Germanic. It would seem much easier for Warsaw to turn to Germany than to Russia. This is the Gothic West. This square is haunted by the ghosts of the Thirty Years' War. The fight is between Catholics and Protestants. An Orthodox cathedral here must have looked like a Buddhist temple."

"I suppose," Julius went on, "it is the conviction that Germany is the great representative Protestant power which softens the hearts—and the heads—of so many people in Britain and America. A lot of them are already inclined to regard this creature Hitler as a second Luther. He has indeed many of the attributes of the revivalist. And a lot of our more obtuse Catholics are prepared to

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look on him kindly because they think he may be the precursor of a revival of Austria."

"I've always thought that the greatest mistake of Versailles was to keep Germany whole and break up Austria," said John. "I'm getting so sober again, I shall soon be at the mercy of common sense."

"It was a mistake to keep Germany whole," Julius agreed. "But it would have been a sentimental folly to preserve Austria. One must have lived under Austrian rule to realize its utter innate feebleness. The Austrian Empire served its purpose once as a bulwark to any further advance west by the Muscovites and as a counterbalance to a too preponderant France; but it ceased to possess any justification for survival after Sadowa. Thence onward it was an appendage of Prussia. I think that some kind of federation of Central European States is a necessary preliminary to the real pacification of Europe, but such a confederation is out of the question while Germany and Russia both dread such a notion. In justice to the flamboyant Trotsky he did believe in such a federation. As things are, I'm sure that if it did become a practical policy we should find Germany and Russia as close allies to prevent it. But don't waste sighs on Austria, John. Vienna was a delightful city once, but like so many delightful cities it was rotten. You never knew Vienna. I did. God, how rotten it was!"

"Not so rotten as Berlin," John urged.

"Berlin isn't rotten. Berlin is purulent," the other declared. "But do give up this sentimental claptrap about Austria, John. Incidentally, this creature Hitler is an Austrian. There are no more Schuberts or Mozarts. Are you quite sober again?"

"Yes, this carp we're trying to eat would quell the potency of any wine. How the Poles preserved their vitality on carp is beyond my imagination."

John pushed aside his plate distastefully.

"We'll settle that carp with a glass of blackberry brandy presently. I'm going to have some veal now," Julius announced. "And this afternoon we'll go and look at the Lazienki Palace."

John and Julius stayed two more days in Warsaw and then went south to Cracow. It had been their intention to visit the site of

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Julius's house among the corn and spend a little time in the heart of the Polish countryside. Pan Adamski, the old schoolmaster, had died during the previous winter and Julius decided it would be a barren pilgrimage now that there was nobody left with whom to talk over that interlude of thirty years ago.

The hotel where they had stayed in that August of 1901 and where Julius and his mother had stayed ten years ago had been pulled down, but they found another close by overlooking the gardens outside the Florian Gate; and on a morning of hot September sunshine, when the market-place was crowded with vendors under big coloured parasols selling all kinds of fruits and vegetables and gourds, strings of dried funguses, cheese and eggs and poultry, John and Julius forsook the gay scene for the glowing twilight of St Mary's Church. A late Mass was being said at a side altar by the south door, for it was the festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. When Mass was over they sat in one of the isolated carved Renaissance pews in the body of the church, which was empty now except for a few devotees kneeling before the gleaming jewelled caverns of saintly shrines. They sat in the solemnity of that twilight stained with rays from the high windows of honey and emerald and rose beneath that vaulted roof blue as night and gilded with a multitude of stars. They sat there, meditating upon the sublime triptych of Veit Stoss portraying the life of the Blessed Virgin, the central scene of which was the Assumption wherein the angels bearing the body aloft were carved with such boldness of relief that they seemed to float away with the Queen of Heaven and hang suspended between earth and sky. After a while they came out of the church into the crowded market of the square. It was one o'clock, and above the cooing of the myriad pigeons, the trumpeter's horary tune was heard from his room under the eight small spires of the taller of the two towers of St Mary's Church. That tune had been blown half-way through the thirteenth century to warn the city that the Tartar hordes were at hand. An arrow had pierced the watchman's throat before his tune was finished, and ever since, without missing an hour of the day or night, trumpeter after trumpeter had blown that same tune from the four windows of that room at the top of the church tower and ever since had ended on the same wavering note, the last note blown by the watchman before the Tartar arrow pierced his throat.

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Eastward the trumpeters had blown defiance to the Tartar, and southward they had blown defiance to the Turk. To the west they now proclaimed that Poland was the guardian of Europe against the Bolshevik advance, and to the north they now gave warning that as she had stood firm against Luther so she would stand firm against any new German assault upon the spirit of man.

"More than ever does that trumpet make a vital affirmation to-day," John said. "When I first heard it call the hour thirty years ago it was remote as Roland's olifant. It was a horn of elf-land faintly blowing. And now here am I who will be fifty next month able to hear that bugle-call as an expression of sharper reality than fell upon the dreaming ears of youth. That Poland could stand for anything then except one of these lost causes which warm the imagination of the young . . . or do they any longer, Julius? Perhaps modern youth has turned against lost causes, and who could blame it?"

"I'm sure it has," Julius replied. "Fascism and National Socialism and Communism, those are the kind of causes that youth turns to to-day."

"Yes, yes," John agreed, "even that trumpet-call is no longer the last-post of a dead Poland but the reveillé of a Polonia Restituta. I'm bound to say I do wish we could have had some of the political excitement we are getting in middle-age when we were really young."

"I wasn't hankering after political excitement."

"You didn't have that endless boredom of school. You know, if I were offered my life over again, Julius, I would refuse the offer because it would entail serving over again that penal servitude of school. I think they must have devised a scheme for making it less boring. Padraig Fitzgerald seems to enjoy it thoroughly at Ampleside. We who went to school in the last decade of the nineteenth century were being educated in a dead world. No wonder we were attracted to lost causes. Even Emil who scorned my lost causes was attracted by Marx, and at that date it seemed as unlikely that his theories would ever be tried out as that Poland would ever recover her independence."

"All the same," Julius said, "I often regret that I didn't have to endure that penal servitude. I believe I might have composed

some really great music if I had. That brings us back to my theory that the fundamental inspiration of music is indeed claustrophobia."

"It was here in this market square you first told me of your intention to give up playing on the concert platform and retire into solitude for the sake of the music you meant to write one lay. You had been stung by Emil's theory that you would never be more than a first-class violinist."

"I believe he was right," Julius muttered, and the expression on his face at that moment was the very same expression John could recall so often in his childhood.

"Your instinct then was to bury yourself inland. Had you evolved your theory already?" he asked.

"I don't remember. But I do remember, John, your coming out of the church all in a daze because some hours had passed without your knowing it and both of us tried to explain one to the other an experience that was incommunicable. I do remember being envious of your experience in a church, and I believe that was the first moment I turned toward the Christian faith as something which might be granted to me. And when I was in Cracow with my mother ten years ago I went through the snow to St Mary's Church at Candlemas, and when the *Nunc Dimittis* was being sung by the choir I felt for the first time the full wonder of the grace accorded to me, a Jew, to see the light that was to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Israel. And when I got back to the hotel I remember teasing my mother about her unwillingness to visit any of her ghetto friends with me because she could not stand up to racial snobbery, and I remember laughing at her because she would sooner admit to her Cracow connections that she had a son in prison for Communist activities than a son who had become a Catholic."

They were lunching with the editor of one of the Cracow papers, who afterwards showed them over the offices.

"They are very modern," said the Editor, gazing at the excess of glass over masonry with pride. "And the staff are all very content," he added.

"They look as happy as tomatoes," Julius commented.

"It is health-making to have well-equipped offices like these," the Editor observed. "And so very modern. For years the

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Austrians have prevented all modern things in Cracow. They feared always revolution. Such offices for a newspaper were impossible under the Austrians."

"And I suppose equally impossible in Warsaw under the Russians," John suggested.

"Quite impossible," the Editor confirmed. "It was the policy of the Prussians, the Russians, and the Austrians to keep Poland backward. But since we are free we have made everything as modern as we could. You have been in Gdynia, I think. That is completely modern." The Editor sighed. He appeared to be feeling a slight regret that such mediaeval excrescences as St Mary's Church, the Rondell, the Florian Gate, the Wawel, and the Cathedral, not to mention the University Library, the Tuckhaus, and a score of churches, made Cracow impossible as a rival of the modernity of Gdynia.

"Gdynia is remarkable," his visitors assured him.

"There was nothing there. Gdynia has been created from nothing. But the offices of our paper are as modern as any offices in Gdynia. Wait, I think you will like to see the first afternoon edition."

Presently the visitors were handed a copy of the paper, on which the ink was still damp.

"You will read a paragraph about yourselves," the Editor told them. "To-morrow, after the interesting conversation we have had for lunch, you will read much more. And now, please, come for being photographed. We consider our studio the most modern photograph studio in Poland. It is a pity the day is so fine, because I would like you to see how well we can make photographs when it is not so fine."

They followed the Editor up to the studio which was on the top storey, with a wide view over the magical city of Cracow.

"Hullo," Julius exclaimed, looking up from the paper he had been glancing through, "did you know you were addressing the English class of the University to-morrow evening on 'Some Aspects of the Contemporary British Drama?'"

"What?" John gasped.

"You have read my paragraph?" the Editor enquired, beaming. "It will cause much interest I think."

John asked his friend to read the announcement:

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"Artistic circles in Cracow have been greatly interested to hear that the distinguished English composer and violin virtuoso Pan Julius Stern and the renowned English dramatist Pan John Ogilvie are at present visiting the city. Pan Stern is no stranger to Poland where musical amateurs have enjoyed his virtuosity as a child violinist. Some years ago he conducted one of his symphonies at Warsaw and was acclaimed as a composer of outstanding merit, all the more warmly because he has ancestral links with our country.

"Pan Ogilvie is one of the leading dramatists in Great Britain where he is regarded as an outstanding representative of the modern school. It is good news to hear that Professor S. Kiersnowski has invited him to address his English class on 'Some Aspects of the Contemporary British Drama' at the Y.M.C.A. rooms in the University to-morrow evening at eight o'clock. It is expected that many students will avail themselves of the opportunity to enjoy this intellectual treat."

"But this is the first I've heard of such an address," John protested.

"Ah, you have not seen Professor Kiersnowski?" the Editor asked. "But I know he had the intention to invite you to speak to his class. I am sure there is a letter for you at your hotel. It was a student who gave me the news and so I have made a paragraph about it for our afternoon edition. Wait, I will send a message-boy to the hotel. And if there is a letter from Professor Kiersnowski he shall bring it when you are being photographed."

And there *was* a letter from Professor Kiersnowski hoping for the pleasure of their company at dinner that night and expressing also the hope that Mr Ogilvie might be persuaded to give an informal talk to the students of his English class at the University on the following evening.

"Ah, very good," said the Editor, with a touch of complacency. "I was so sure our information cannot be incorrect."

"Yes, but I haven't accepted the Professor's invitation," John pointed out.

"No, but I think you will please now telephone to Professor Kiersnowski and say yes you will dine with him to-night and yes you will address his students to-morrow at the Y.M.C.A. rooms in the University. He will be so very anxious to hear what you say.

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Poor fellow, I am really sorry for him. And he will be a little angry with me if my paragraph is not so accurate."

"And so I'm to be sacrificed to the prestige of the Press?" John asked reproachfully.

The Editor beamed.

"I think so, please."

Professor Kiersnowski was rather indignant when he heard of the way the Press had anticipated his guest's answer to his invitation and inclined to blame his daughter for chattering.

"It was not intended to be a public occasion, Mr Ogilvie. If you were kind enough to say 'yes' I had proposed to invite a few of my English pupils to meet you and listen to an informal talk. I don't at all like all this Press publicity. It is very vulgar. I don't know why you couldn't keep your tongue quiet, Wanda," he said to his daughter.

"Wanda talks too much always," Madame Kiersnowska pronounced severely.

"Ah well, don't, please, be so fast to put all blame on me," said her daughter.

"Quick," the Professor corrected. "It is not idiomatic English to use the word 'fast' like that. You speak of a fast horse, but you yourself cannot be fast except with a very unpleasant signification."

"Do not be so quick to put all blame on me," Wanda repeated. "If I was not so fast . . . ha-ha, I think I am now being so very idiomatical . . . so fast to speak to these two gentlemen at Kiel you could not have them to amuse you, my dear Professor, this evening, and to amuse all your beloved students to-morrow at the Y.M.C.A."

"The Y.M.C.A.?" John repeated. "Is it really the Y.M.C.A.? I thought my ears were deceiving me."

"It is not a Protestant club," Wanda explained. "All students are members who want. They have nice rooms where you can sit and read and have tea and such things."

"Indeed, it is an admirable institution," the Professor confirmed.

And on the following evening John talked to about three dozen young men and young women seated at a large oblong table not so much about the British drama as about the opportunity Polish youth

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had to flash in the eyes of the world the many facets of the diamond independence.

"The precious stone is now in your keeping. It lies with you not to give it an unworthy setting. Youth is more powerful to-day in its potential influence upon the course of European events than perhaps ever before in the world's history. Ten years ago the youth of Italy splendidly credulous accepted the gospel of Fascism. It is too soon yet to estimate where it has led them or to prophesy where it will lead them. This only can I tell you. Every time I revisit Italy the bragging and boasting about the vitality of the new Italy grows louder, and every time I revisit Italy that vitality seems to resemble more and more the vitality of clockwork they have wound up to simulate true life. I cannot speak from first-hand knowledge of National Socialism. I never have and I never will set my foot on German ground. But I feel in my soul that it is a more poisonous and a more mephitic effluence and influence than Italian Fascism. National Socialism like Fascism makes its appeal to the splendid credulity of youth, and if it should become all-powerful in Germany it will become so because it is fed by youth. We are living in a period which in many ways resembles the period round about the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation. In certain aspects German National Socialism can find close parallels in the methods by which the Protestant Reformation gained ground in Germany just as in the growth of Fascism close parallels can be found for the political development of Italy by the *condottieri* of the Renaissance. Against that Protestant Reformation of Germany Poland stood firm, and it would not be extravagant to claim that by standing firm Poland prevented the complete subversion of the European mind. On the youth of Poland to-day may lie the responsibility of deciding what the future of Europe shall be. Is the tomb of liberty to be the monstrous concrete hive or ant-hill of the Totalitarian State? Has it been written that the insect-state is to be the end of man's development? If such is humanity's doom, let the ants be red or black, it does not matter. I cannot be more explicit this evening, for in being more explicit I should run the risk as a foreigner of talking politics, which would be an impertinence. I disclaim any notion of talking politics. I am merely reminding you that once upon a time there was a spiritual revolution which was magnificently rejected by Poland. At this moment Europe is

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already in the throes of another spiritual revolution, and nobody who has witnessed with awe the miracle of Poland's rebirth as a sovereign nation can help asking himself what will be Poland's attitude toward this spiritual revolution.

"Your greatly respected teacher Professor Kiersnowski invited me to talk to you about the British drama. I tried to tell you something about the British drama, but I must be frank and say that at this time the British drama seems to me to lack the slightest importance when the imagination contemplates the stupendous European drama of the probable construction of which we can already dimly perceive a rough outline, but only a very rough outline and with inadequate vision.

"I cannot believe that Almighty God restored Poland to sovereignty as a state unless He had chosen Poland to play a decisive part in that stupendous European drama which is now in the making. I do not believe that this world is spun round in time and space as aimlessly as a roulette-ball. I believe that Poland possesses a mystical significance in human destiny. You may be old when the curtain rises on the stupendous drama that will be played. He would be a rash man who would dare to make a date for it, but that such a drama will be played sooner or later who can doubt?

"The Thirty Years' War was inevitable when Luther nailed his thesis to the door at Wittenberg. You may be old, I repeat, when the curtain rises, but it is the road that the youth of Poland follows in the next few years which will decide the part Poland will play when the curtain does rise."

When John had finished speaking the oblong table was laid for tea, and Professor Kiersnowski took the visitor aside.

"You were alluding, very discreetly of course, to the rumour that the Government intends to seek a *rapprochement* with Germany?" he asked.

"No, indeed," John replied, "I had not heard of any such rumour. I really was thinking of the larger spiritual issue behind any *rapprochement* either with Germany or Russia."

"Nevertheless such a *rapprochement* is being widely discussed in private, and I think it would be wise, if you do not object, not to report the latter part of your lecture in the Press. It might be misunderstood."

"My dear Professor, the last thing I should want is for my talk

to-night to be accorded the faintest political significance. Besides, I may be wrong. I may be exaggerating the political menace of National Socialism."

John told the Professor about the swastika painted on the fence which they had seen from the train.

"Perhaps it made an excessive impression on my fancy," he said. "I think to-night is the first time that I have put into words my apprehension of a struggle for the soul of man. I'm afraid I was too emphatic altogether."

"No, no, I'm glad you spoke as you did speak," the Professor assured his guest. "It is good that youth should not suppose the peace of Europe is dependent on the ability of a few statesmen to play chess with one another. Youth believes so easily that old people make muddles. It was the same after the war. So many young people were believing that if they had been directing affairs no war could have happened. We were not so bad about that in Poland because naturally we knew that without the war there could never have been a Poland reborn. If ever another great war should appear upon the horizon it will be well that the young people or the old people either do not think it can be avoided by skilful chess moves. We are very fond of chess in Poland," he added. "And now please come to the table. We are always so English and eat a large English tea after we have enjoyed our lecture."

John found himself next the Professor's fair-haired daughter at tea.

"You spoke so truly, oh, it was really splendid the way you have spoken," she told him. "You see that we must attack Germany the first moment we are able."

"Well, that wasn't quite the corollary . . ."

"The what, please?"

"That wasn't quite what I was meaning to suggest," John said.

"These Poles who try to make a flirt with the Germans are really traitors to Poland," Wanda Kiersnowska declared. "But do not be afraid. We shall be strong for ourselves. It is only if Germany shall make a plot with Russia that we can feel a little uncomfortable."

"I don't think that will happen if Hitler gets into power," said John.

"I wouldn't feel quite so sure of that," Julius leant across the

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table to warn John. "My own belief is that the Germans will stick at nothing to recover their power in Europe. And this Hitler creature will speak for Germany. He is the voice of a nation which has persuaded itself by now that the war was forced upon it. It is the voice of millions of self-deluded thwarted murderers and thieves pitying themselves because in the end the police were too strong for them. If Germany wants to find an accomplice for another assault on Europe she will find it in Russia as easily as she found one in Austria. It is madness to imagine that Hitler should be supported because he has frothed at the mouth on platforms about the Bolshevik menace. There is only one way to teach the Germans that they were not deliberately first encircled and then attacked in 1914, and that is to take advantage of the encirclement achieved at Versailles and fall upon them now. They should be taught what it does mean to be attacked and ravaged by invading armies. They require a lesson that will last for a century and give them time to begin to civilize themselves."

"Excuse me, sir," a young man put in, "but do you not think it is the duty of the youth of all countries to make a determination all together so that there can be no more war? It is old people who bring war, but it is youth who must fight in such a war they have not made, I think. We must be resolved in no case at all to accept any excuse for a war, and if a war comes we must put ourselves out of it."

"And if these Brownshirt fanatics of Hitler march into the Corridor you will stand aside?" Julius asked.

"Ah, that would be war of defence," the young man pointed out. "Naturally we must fight for the defence of our country."

"But if you wait until the Brownshirts have attacked Poland, whether you fight or not will make no difference," Julius told him. "I really do think this theory of yours that wars are made by old people is a dangerous piece of self-deception. It's as dangerous as the German theory that they never make war on other nations until other nations have made war on them. How can you seriously believe that Poland will be able to retain her sovereign independence unless the youth of Poland are preparing now to fight for it?"

"We are spending quite fantastic sums of money on our army," the young man pointed out. "I have heard many say that Poland is showing the intention she has to fight Germany with such an

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army, but excuse me, sir, if I tell you that you are the first visitor we have who accuses us of being too peaceful."

"And you believe that if Poland disarmed you would convince the Germans that you were entitled to keep all that was restored to you?"

"I perceive you are so certain, sir, that we will have another war that my arguments must seem bad," the young man said.

"Your arguments would be excellent," Julius replied, "if there were no Germans in the world. We might still be living in Eden if there was no Devil."

"But excuse me, sir," the young student pressed. "I have here a book by an Englishman about Hitler. Wyndham Lewis is his name. You know him, perhaps?"

"I know of him," John said. "What does he say?"

The student produced a volume bound in flesh-coloured cloth and stamped with a swastika. He began to read:

"There is another matter upon which it is necessary, so it seems, to give some enlightenment: namely, the question, so often asked, whether Germany contemplates a War of Revenge. Are not the Hitlerist 'storm-detachments' from that point of view an international danger? This is as a matter of fact a complete absurdity. The military power of France to-day is so overwhelming, and Germany has been so scrupulously disarmed, that such an eventuality as a 'war of revenge'—or even, if the French were not there, an attack upon Poland about the famous 'corridor'—would be like asking a naked unarmed man to make a frontal attack upon a machine-gun nest (with a cloud of bomb-bearing aeroplanes circling overhead).—The idea, in short, of Germany being a 'military menace' can be entirely dismissed from the most apprehensive mind.

"You do not agree with that, sir?" the young student asked.

Julius scowled.

"I think it is such contemptible nonsense that I would not accord it as much mental energy as to disagree," he replied. "When was that gruel served?"

"Please?"

"When was that book published?"

"It has been published last year," the owner of it replied.

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"Oh, he has quite a following in England," John put in.

"This Wyndham Lewis fellow?" Julius asked in amazement.

"No, no, Hitler. The English love the Germans, Julius, almost as much as they love dogs, and if only they could train them to behave as well as dogs they might love them even more."

"I don't think I ever realized before that you were so profoundly anti-German, Julius," John said to him when they were walking back to their hotel that evening. "I don't think you used to be."

"I deprecate the expression 'anti-German'. If I argued that homicidal maniacs should be kept under restraint would you call me 'anti-lunatic'? Convince me of the possibility of segregating the whole German nation from the rest of the world and I shall love them beyond any other because I should be confident that great music would be heard again."

A day or two later they went to Zakopane on the lower slopes of the High Tatra.

"Though why we came here," Julius said when they were standing on the balcony outside their rooms on the afternoon of their arrival, "I cannot imagine."

They were looking down upon a road that ran between pine-trees and watching tired people dressed in their own fancy to resemble mountaineers returning from long walks up and down hill.

"I wonder why people who take their holidays in mountainous country always go to such expense to acquire the local costume," John speculated. "Switzerland, the Tyrol, Salzburg, and the Highlands drive people into displaying their knees. People who take their holidays by the sea don't feel impelled to disguise themselves as longshoremen."

"I always wonder if people who come to a holiday resort ever really enjoy themselves at all," said Julius. "Of course, the finest examples of self-conscious holiday-making are to be found in the United States."

"Like Coney Island?"

"No, no, no. Coney Island is just a super-fun-fair, and the people who go to Coney Island *are* enjoying themselves. So they are at Blackpool. No, I mean the mountain resort or the mineral spring, to enjoy which visitors seem to have to pretend that they are

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temporarily natives. Just as they are doing here in Zakopane. Do they enjoy it? That's what I want to know. Look at that family party."

"I think they probably do," said John. "I think people like you and me who are tied to nothing except our work are apt to scoff too easily at families like that. I suspect that this interlude of freedom from normal existence requires the spur of dressing up in order that the transformation may be effected immediately. If they didn't dress up they might find half their holidays gone before they had adapted themselves to the change completely enough to be capable of making the most of it. We can visit a place like Zakopane and take it for granted from the moment we arrive. We don't have to fit ourselves into our surroundings. Yet, I remember during the war when one had a spot of leave how anxious one was to get into mufti at once and escape from the atmosphere of constraining uniform.

"I fancy this dressing up in shorts and nailed shoes and Tyrolean hats is the same impulse working the other way round. I'm sure if it wasn't so expensive and usually so tight we should find visitors dressed up in this red-and-blue-embroidered white rig-out of the local mountaineers."

"These professional beauty spots depress me," Julius insisted. "I don't know why we came here. The Poles ought to be able to do something better with their freedom than play about with Little Switzerlands. One Switzerland is enough for Europe."

"I gather that the particular charm of this Little Switzerland is the fact that the Czechs think it ought to be their Little Switzerland," said John.

That evening after dinner their friend the Editor paid an unexpected call. He had heard in Cracow that they were visiting Zakopane and had inserted a paragraph with the news. Now he had the felicity of being able to inform them that to-morrow a hostel was to be formally opened on one of the mountains in the Tatra that belonged to Poland and that their presence at the ceremony, which would include an open air Mass with plenty of good food and good drink afterwards, was requested by those responsible for the entertainment. If they would accept the invitation he should have the honour of conveying them in his car to the point whence it should be necessary to walk the last mile or two to the hostel.

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"And it will be a very good experience for you, I think," the Editor said. "Very what you call characteristic. Zakopane is not entirely characteristic. The simple life of the people is a little corrupted by making souvenirs for the visitors."

"The simple life on exhibition has become a turn in the circus provided for democracy everywhere," said John. "The bread provided by the simple life is not enough. It must contribute its quota to the circus. What time do we start to-morrow morning?"

"At five o'clock, please," the Editor informed them. "The Mass will be at twelve o'clock."

"That's a pretty long drive," Julius observed.

"Not so very long. We will arrive at . . ." he named the terminus of the drive, "at about seven o'clock."

"Five hours to walk a mile or two?" Julius asked suspiciously.

"It can be perhaps three or four miles," the Editor allowed with a hint of appeasement in his voice. "But very beautiful and rustic. You will be very pleased, I think."

"And that car really is going to start at five o'clock?" Julius pressed. "Because if it's going to start two hours later we'd sooner spend those two hours in bed."

"At five o'clock the second," the Editor vowed, his hand upon his heart, his eyes bright with a passionate conviction of punctuality.

And to reward such faith the car was clear of Zakopane and sweeping round the upward curves of the majestic road into the heart of the mountains by a quarter to six on the following morning.

At eight o'clock they reached a water-mill in a valley of lush grass and babbling streams bounded by densely wooded precipices. This was as far as the car could take them and they set out to walk the last three or four miles, escorted by a guide in the shape of a small boy from the water-mill. The way at first led along a muddy track through sparse woodland where a few campanulas lingered in the dappled sunlight. It was too late in the year, however, for many flowers, and there were not many butterflies to attract Julius. Birds too were seldom seen, and the silence was pervasive. After a couple of miles the woodland gave place to a glen between two arid-looking limestone ridges some two thousand feet high, above the top of which cumulus was heaped in snowy amplitude against the blue. Here the path was rocky, and after an hour of it John asked the Editor how far the hostel was now.

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"Another mile, perhaps, I think. You do not fatigue yourself too much?"

"I'm not in the best of training for a ten-mile walk," John replied.

"Ten miles?" the Editor expostulated. "No, no, no. Perhaps five. And I do not think even that."

"I reckon we've done at least six miles already," Julius declared.

"Impossible," the Editor insisted. "These stones make the path a little difficult, yes?"

The glen narrowed soon after this, and after a mile of thickly wooded progress they caught sight of an austere grey building beyond a loop of the stream.

"Ah, it's not so far after all," John exclaimed with relief. "We're in good time. It's only just after ten."

"That is not the hostel," the Editor said. "That is a forsaken house."

And when they drew near to it they saw that the roof was tumbledown, that the windows had hardly a whole pane, and that the doors were rotten.

"Well, we'll rest here for a bit," John suggested.

"This has been a hostel," the Editor explained. "But you will see that the new hostel is much nicer."

"I'm longing to see the new hostel," John sighed.

"I've been consulting with our guide," Julius put in, "and he is strongly opposed to this ruin as a place of rest. He says that a pedlar was murdered here some years ago and that the pedlar's ghost is still unpleasantly active. He also says that the new hostel is at least a couple of hours' hard uphill walking from here."

"Ah, you have not understood what he is saying," the Editor said. "The dialect here is so difficult. Sometimes I find I cannot understand it quite clearly myself."

"I expect that was why you thought the hostel was only a mile or two from where the car stopped," Julius answered with a grin. "Luckily I *can* understand the dialect perfectly."

"Another two hours?" John groaned. "That'll mean at least thirty miles there and back."

"No, no, no, no, no!" the Editor protested. "We will go back by another way so much quicker where you will see a very beautiful lake and have some wonderful food and drink. And I am sure the

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boy is wrong. They make terrible exaggerations, these mountainous people. I think it will perhaps be another quarter of an hour to the hostel."

However, the youthful guide's estimate of the time needed proved the more correct. It was twenty minutes past twelve when they turned the corner of the last boulder-strewn curve of that upward path and saw on the other side of a mountain lawn the cosy eaves of the new hostel built of wood in the traditional chalet style beside a sparkling tarn.

"We stand now over six thousand feet ups," the Editor proclaimed proudly.

"It wouldn't surprise me if we were twice as high," John declared with fervour.

The arrival of the Editor and his two British visitors was enthusiastically hailed by a polyglot crowd of guests gathered for the opening, most of them dressed in shorts with Tyrolese hats.

There was time to sit for a while in the big common-room of the hostel and drink a pot of Pilsener before the Mass began, and then they went out to where on a grassy terrace of the mountainside the altar was set up among juniper bushes. The day was ferial, celebrating neither virgin nor martyr nor confessor, and the green vestments of the priest seemed to express earth's submission to Heaven on this remote height. The flames of the candles sheltered in their lanterns from the light September breeze could not compete with the sunshine that flashed from the uplifted chalice and poured down upon the bowed worshippers a celestial warmth.

In the peace of this act of worship by the men of half a dozen and more nationalities John was seized with an overwhelming sense of the crime against Nature and the sin against God that another great war would be. Here they were in the very heart of that Central Europe which within a few years must burst into flames the way it was now being fed with mutual hatreds and jealousies, with impoverishment and baffled hope and thwarted opportunity, and with the black fuel of despair. Yet they could be at peace with one another in this common act of worship. There were no politics in Paradise, no quota for Elysium, and passports for that last and longest journey of death were granted more easily to the soul than for an earthly journey to the body.

Kneeling next to John was a young German with fair hair and

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a fresh complexion dressed in corduroy shorts, white stockings and a white shirt with a Byron collar. When Mass was over they fell into conversation on the way back to the hostel. He was from the Sudetenland and his name was Heinrich Bauer. John complimented him upon his English and he said he had been in Eng and a good deal.

"Or rather in Scotland, though I know the English think that is just the same."

"The English may, but the Scots don't."

"You are Scotch, I think, by the way you say that."

"Sufficiently a Scot to resent its complete absorption into England," John replied.

"Then you will sympathize with somebody like me who is absorbed into Czechoslovakia. That is why when I come to the Tatra I come to the Polish part."

"Surely the Germans resent the Poles as much as the Czechs?" John asked.

"Ach, yes, in Prussia where they are next-door neighbours, but we can be quite fond of them in the Sudetenland."

"Is it impossible for the people of Central Europe to live together in amity?" John demanded rhetorically.

"To answer such a question I would have to give you a long lecture on economics," the young German replied. "And I think you would find that rather boring. It is best to enjoy the beauty of this place and the good food we will soon be eating."

"Will you answer one question? Will you explain to me what is the fascination of Hitler?"

The young German turned to look his interrogator straight in the eyes.

"Adolf Hitler is necessary for us," he testified solemnly. "You could not understand why if you did not know Germany. He is restoring to us our belief in ourselves. Soon he will certainly be Chancellor and you will see how the German people will follow him."

"Even along the road that will break up peace in Europe?"

"There is no peace in Europe," the young German asserted. "That is where you British people deceive yourselves. As Tacitus said, you have made a desert and you call it peace. Or it might be truer to say the French have made a desert and it is you who call it

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peace. That is a habit of the English. They call a thing by a name and imagine that therefore it must be what they call it."

"Well, I'll admit that's to some extent a just observation," John agreed. "But surely a nominal peace that may gradually settle down into real peace is better than another European war which must leave Europe a desert for fifty years?"

"You have just made war certain."

"We have?" John exclaimed in surprise.

"By closing the door of the British Empire. It is a pity. A generous gesture to Europe might have changed everything. This Ottawa Conference has shown that you are not willing to be generous. It is a pity. You are rich enough even after the Great War to open your Empire. You have been rich long enough to be idealist. And it would be a practical idealism because unless you can populate the British Empire how can you hope to withstand the power of America? You will in time become just a part of the United States. The United States could not have made themselves strong with British people only. And you cannot make yourselves strong so. It is a pity. If you shut out Europe from your Empire how can you expect Europe to accept you as a leader? And if you are not the leader it must be Germany."

"Do you really believe a man like Hitler is capable of settling the future of Europe?" John asked.

"Adolf Hitler will restore Germany to life, and Germany is certainly capable of settling the future of Europe. Otherwise Europe will fall to Russia, and I do not think that you as a Catholic will think Bolshevism is good."

"I do not. But I fear that National Socialism is only another aspect of Bolshevism. Indeed, I prefer Bolshevism. I prefer to see power in the hands of a class capable of development than in that of a class which has had the chance to develop and failed."

They had reached the hostel by now and the conversation was cut short. While the company had been at Mass two long trestle-tables in the common-room had been laid for lunch and everybody took his place. Healths were drunk. Speeches were made. Jollity was rampant.

"I could almost believe in the efficacy of the League of Nations," Julius observed to John.

"Like a Labour politician," said John. "He is convinced that

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a good high tea in Geneva will solve the knottiest of international problems. But at Mass I felt even more fraternal and walked back with that young German over there most amicably, though he is a fervid follower of Hitler, whom he seems to regard as a cross between Mahomet, Mrs Eddy, and the Kaiser. He made some rather pungent remarks about the Ottawa Conference, and I'm inclined to agree with him. You know, Julius, if this fellow Hitler is going to get control of Germany I don't feel that Ramsay MacDonald even with the help of Stanley Baldwin is as potent an exorcist as we shall want."

"It's a pity that the Church ever since the counter-Reformation has supported political reaction in Europe, and always been suspicious of democracy," Julius reflected. "The strength of the Church in America is that it inclines to liberalism."

"Isn't that largely due to the Irish influence?" John suggested. "In Ireland itself the Church stood for the people against the overlordship either of rank or wealth, and was always so closely identified with the struggle against a foreign domination. I fancy the root of this deplorable illiberalism at the Vatican may be the heritage of the Risorgimento. It is really a heartbreak to look back at the sublime opportunity missed by Pius the Ninth. To take refuge at the court of an infamous outworn Bourbon from the people of Rome! To miss the opportunity of presiding over an united Italy and allow himself to be used as ammunition by the Austrian guns. What a prelude to the Dogma of Infallibility if Mazzini's vision could have been realized of the eternal city's unifying the whole world as Rome of the People! And instead, Italy was handed over to the tirelessly acquisitive, physically valiant, morally timid, and always treacherous little House of Savoy. And from the six hundred thousand Italian dead in the Great War, what? This swollen maggot Mussolini!"

"And I fear his present Holiness is allowing himself to dream that Italy is capable of sustaining the majesty of the Church," Julius went on. "What a test of the Vatican it will be when Poland is in danger! Although you were able to bask in a sense of fraternity during that Mass, I was feeling all the while it was only that deceptive tranquillity which portends a storm. I think, after all, we *will* go and visit the site of my house before we return to England. Does that suit you?"

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"Rather! I was disappointed when you decided not to go," John replied.

Presently the Editor came along to say that if they were sufficiently rested it would be as well to set out on the journey down.

"I will come perhaps to Scotland next year," the young German told John when they parted. "I would like much to see your island, yes?"

"I shall welcome a visit," John assured him.

The guests at the hotel gathered to bid them farewell, raising their mugs of Pilsener or goblets of a rough red wine in salute, and as they set out beside the sparkling tarn toward the opposite ridge of this high upland the sound of a rustic orchestra floated after them with the light September breeze and the chorus of some old drinking-song died away upon the mountain air.

"Look here," said John to the Editor, "I hope this isn't the start of another fifteen-mile tramp."

"No, no, no, no. We are at the car in just a moment. It is all very much down. You will see very soon how much down it is. If it was winter we would go on skis like that. Pouf!" And his own arm described a swift parabola upon the bright exhilarating atmosphere.

They came to the edge of the ridge and stood for a while to gaze at the wide view of range upon range of mountains beyond the steep descent immediately before them.

"Ah, these Czechs," the Editor muttered sombrely as he surveyed the prospect. "Believe me, all that is Czech land," he went on, pointing to the range beyond the deep valley into which they were about to plunge.

"The frontier must begin somewhere," Julius commented.

"When it is a good frontier, yes," the Editor agreed. "But this is a bad frontier. We have here a small . . . bilge I think you say."

"Bulge," John suggested.

"Bilge, bulge, it is the same. You understand me. So, right, left, in front it is all Czech land. That is very bad. Ah, these Czechs, these Czechs!"

"But does it make a great deal of difference whether Czechoslovakia or Poland rules these mountains?" John asked.

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"It could make a big difference if there is war," the Editor insisted. "The Poles could not hold the Polish Tatra with so much Czech Tatra all round."

"You'll make a mistake if you quarrel with the Czechs," Julius warned. "You have more dangerous enemies in Germany and Russia."

"But the Czechs like so much the Russians," the Editor said in a gloomy voice. "And if Russia attacks Poland, be sure the Czechs will try to have the Polish Tatra for themselves. I have seen how those Czechs and Slovaks in the hostel were looking round themselves. Without doubt they were thinking it could be a very good hostel for them."

"I don't agree with you at all," John argued. "I thought the whole atmosphere was most fraternal."

"You do not understand the Czechs, my friend," the Editor insisted. "They are not at all like the Poles, frank and free and saying what they want. They want inside themselves. They have a very dark inside. I am not so fond of Germans, but that German from Sudetenland is right about Czechs. He finds them quite a problem. We have many Polish Czechophiles. I find such Poles entirely mad."

"And while you're worrying about scraps, my friend," Julius assured him earnestly, "the Germans are thinking about the whole joint, and when the moment is ripe they'll grab it."

The descent was not quite as easy as the Editor had foretold. A couple of hours of it put a hard strain upon the muscles that are brought into play to act as brakes, and by the time they reached the level and were walking through the wooded outskirts of the little town by the lake their legs were wobbly with fatigue.

"But you are glad now you are here?" the Editor enquired anxiously.

They were standing on the balcony of the wooden hotel and looking down at the lake whose water was livid as a thundercloud and ringed on three sides by deep-gashed dark precipices.

"That water certainly is a wonderful colour," Julius testified. "But do you know what would be an even more wonderful colour?" he asked the Editor.

"I cannot think for a more wonderful colour than that," the Editor replied firmly.

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"I can. The colour of beer. If that lake was beer I believe I'd empty it," Julius affirmed.

"Ah-ha, you will drink beer. I am so glad. This hotel has very, very good beer," the Editor exclaimed gleefully.

This time his confidence was fully justified. It was superlative beer, and they drank much of it before they got into the car and drove back to Zakopane.

"To-night we shall have a very characteristical concert," the Editor told them when they reached the hotel. "I will come to fetch you after dinner."

Julius shook his head.

"The only concert I shall listen to to-night is the symphony played by my own snores," he proclaimed firmly. "I have seldom felt so tired."

"I'm absolutely dead," John affirmed in support of his friend.

"I am so sorry," said the Editor sadly. "I am afraid you have not enjoyed your mountainous excursion."

But he was so warmly assured of the pleasure his two guests had had that he was soon beaming again.

"I think my photographer has made some very good photographs of the Mass. It shall be published in our weekly Supplement."

"I'll give you a title for it," John offered.

"If you please."

"The heart of Europe," he said. "The beating heart of Europe," he repeated to himself, with a deep sigh.

The Editor looked puzzled.

"I think you are very tired," he decided.

From Zakopane by way of Tarnow, Julius and John reached the nearest station to the remote village where he had spent eighteen months of his adolescence. They crossed the Vistula by a leisurely ferry on which they dreamed themselves into a fairy-tale world on the other side, so imperceptible was the gliding motion upon the broad river, so unimaginable did a railway train seem in this vast and level countryside of stubble cornfields where youths roamed piping, of tracts of twice-mown grass where goose-girls grazed their flocks. The scattered wooden houses were painted with bright colours and had high steep roofs to baulk the weight of the snow,

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roofs that often almost touched the ground, and in the distance the gleaners in their vivid petticoats and scarves looked like patches of growing flowers.

"My house had a sky-blue wash," Julius told his friend. "And I remember when we first caught sight of it far away in a grove of plum-trees and cherry-trees we thought it was a pool of water. I wish we could see it to-day, John; but it was burnt by the Russians in the war. When my mother and I made our pilgrimage everything was under snow, and I did not miss my sky-blue house so much as I shall to-day, for to-day is very like the day on which I first saw it."

They had been driving for miles on a dusty road across the plain and were drawing near to the hamlet where the house had been.

"You see that orange and yellow house?" Julius asked presently. "My house was not far from that. Strange that for over thirty years they should have kept that house painted orange and yellow and that the Russians should have spared it. I wonder why. We'll stop and look at the site and then we'll call on the priest and see what can be managed in the way of accommodation."

Soon Julius stopped the driver and they alighted from the car to walk across a stubble field until they reached a few scattered stones overgrown with docks and nettles and surrounded by the blackened stumps of trees.

"The kitchen was my music-room," Julius told his friend. "There dreaming I was to become a great artist I found the truth, because it was here I found it, John, even although I waited too many years before I acknowledged it. I wish Father Rucinski hadn't died before he heard I had become a Catholic. Oh, a most delightful man, John, and a saint. God rest his soul. I shan't even be able to introduce you to the old schoolmaster Adamski, God rest his soul. And it was you, John, I've always believed, was responsible for my living here. I think it was your influence with my mother that persuaded her she was not mad to indulge my boyish desire to live by myself in a house of my own. And here we are now, looking at all that is left of my sky-blue house. Yes, yes, I'm glad I changed my mind and brought you here, for though there is no house the clouds cast their shadows upon the stubble just exactly as they did once upon a time, and I used to fancy giant crotchets and

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quavers from those shadows and hear the wind in the leaves of the cherry-trees play the music they wrote across the stubble. But, John, John, you should see it when the corn is full ripe in a wind at summer's end, golden waves of corn as far as the eye can see breaking here and there on green islands of grass. Don't look at me so apprehensively, John. I know I'm on the verge of tears. And I was pretty sure I would be if we did come back here in this September weather. You see I thought here that I would go further in music than I have. The horizon may have looked much more remote in those days, but it seemed so much more easy to reach."

"You have gone a long way towards it."

"We've both gone a long way towards it, John, but neither of us has reached it—neither I as a music-maker nor you as a playwright. I wonder if things were too easy for us both. I wonder if without Leonora's money . . ."

"Julius, Julius, you said the other day you didn't believe that music was dependent on one's surroundings."

"Oh, I think I was trying to persuade myself it wasn't. But you won't find that the lives of the greatest composers were as easy as mine."

"The life of Brahms does not seem to have been difficult."

"Extraordinary creature! I cannot think how the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany produced him. He was a kind of afterbirth of the romantic revival really."

"As Milton was a kind of afterbirth of the Elizabethan age," John suggested. "Or for that matter Tennyson of the romantic revival."

"Wouldn't you compare Tennyson with Mendelssohn rather than with Brahms?" Julius asked.

And soon the nostalgia for youth which had been roused by the site of the house whose steep roof had once sheltered so many dreams vanished as arguing about aesthetic parallels they wandered back across the stubble to where the car was waiting for them.

Father Smolenski, the village priest, was a grave globular man with a closely cropped head of black hair. He was a newcomer and had evidently never heard of Julius's sojourn here thirty years ago. He pressed upon them a ceremonious hospitality which they accepted a little doubtfully, for they fancied they were embarrassing

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him. However, when they spoke at supper of moving on early next morning it was at once evident that their host was quite dismayed at the notion, and in the end they had to stay four nights before he could be persuaded that their departure was not a reflection upon his entertainment.

On the last night of their stay a company of neighbours was assembled in the priest's house, for music and songs and tales. Julius borrowed a violin from one of the assemblage and played gypsy dances and old folk-songs which enchanted all the guests, who lost their shyness after this and chattered away merrily.

One old man said he remembered once spending such an evening when Father Rucinski was the priest and a boy had played as Julius had played to-night. And another old gentleman said he remembered that boy and that he was very fond of eggs.

"I am that boy," Julius proclaimed. Whereupon the two old men both went up and embraced him, and the rest of the company rose from their seats and insisted upon shaking hands with him all over again, after which the evening became surpassingly convivial, while Father Smolenski grew more globular than ever but lost a good deal of his gravity.

Next morning, when the visitors had breakfasted after Mass and the car that was to bear them away from this remote countryside was awaiting their departure, it seemed as if everybody in the hamlet had come to bid them farewell. The goose-girls smiled shyly and the women with their gaily-coloured petticoats and scarves waved to them, laughing in excitement. The old men shouted warnings to beware of the traffic on the road and the young men were inclined to be as shy as the goose-girls, and to cover their embarrassment they played nonchalant little tunes upon their pipes. All too soon the car and its passengers was just a cloud of dust upon the long road across the plain to the ferry; the hamlet and the church and the dear people and their priest were a coloured picture on the page of a book which had been turned.

"And if war comes again," Julius commented bitterly, "these are the people whose houses will be burnt down by indifferent soldiers, whose little store of goods will be pillaged, whose cattle will be taken to help feed armies, whose youth will die on distant fields. Rape and hunger and cold and misery and ruin for them if war comes again."

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Two days later they embarked upon the *Poznan* at Gdynia to sail for London.

"I suppose one ought to feel as much distressed by the prospect of what will happen to a place like this if war comes as by the prospect of what will happen to that enchanting place where you lived," said John. "Modern towns seems built to invite destruction. Yet it will be they that will win most of the sympathy. The outrage that war is upon the life of the peasants is taken for granted. It's not surprising agrarian revolts are usually so bloody. You know, a fight almost to the point of mutual extermination between town and country is easily imaginable sixty or seventy years hence when the problem of soil-erosion and lack of phosphates becomes acute. There has been a faint foreshadowing of it in the Bolshevik compulsion of the peasants to serve their urban population. Our Labour politicians always suppose that the failure of the agricultural population as a whole to support them is due to the remains of feudal influence; but of course what it is really due to is the instinctive feeling of the peasant that the townsman is his enemy. The Labour politician's desire to control the land is not to sustain upon it an independent, healthy, and prosperous peasantry but to extract from the land the cheapest food he can to feed the cities. I never yet saw a Labour politician in rural surroundings who did not obviously in his heart suppose that a human being could not be happy if he was more than five minutes' walk from a fish-and-chips shop, a tin of salmon, a cinema-theatre, or a dog-track. Labour politicians with all their yap and gup about the sins of landlords do not believe in small-holdings, do not desire to preserve what yeomanry is left, and indeed regard all countrymen as a motorist looks at a flock of sheep just ahead of his car."

"Nevertheless, if I were to be born sixty years from now," Julius affirmed, "I would ask to be born a Polish or Roumanian or Yugoslav peasant. True, I might be roasted in my cradle by the soldiers of one urban army or another, but if I survived I might expect to help in ploughing over the site of some megalopolis and fertilizing it with meal ground from the bones of its starved inhabitants."

It was already dark when the *Poznan* entered the Kiel Canal, and next morning when they went on deck the low coast of Germany was invisible beyond the grey North Sea.

"I know!" John suddenly exclaimed.

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"What?"

"What the water in that lake — I've forgotten its name — reminded me of. It was the colour of somebody's eyes."

"Whose?"

"An old Scots rebel called Beaton," John replied. "The same leaden-blue of a thundercloud. I should like you to meet him some day."

"So you still think it was worth while for the Poles that Poland should be restored?" Julius asked.

"Of course. Why do you ask that?"

"I was wondering if your aspirations for Scotland had been damped by this trip we have made."

"Not in the least. I was intensely aware from the moment we landed in Gdynia of an abundant national life, and I think Poland may show the world what Catholic democracy is capable of."

"Provided Poland does not prefer to emulate Italy and show the world what Catholic imperialism can do," said Julius. "I don't like Austrian understudies."

"Well, dear Julius, you and I are both Catholics of the Left and therefore equally exasperated by Left and Right as wholes. Yet we do not have the compensating sedative of the golden mean. We are both extremists."

"I don't think I am at all Left," Julius contradicted.

John laughed.

"Don't be absurd. Of course you are. You don't like admitting it because you think it might suggest to Emil a vulnerable point for his dialectical materialism. By the way, did Marx's totosapience ever forecast that death struggle between town and country?"

"I don't know. *Das Kapital* is one of those books everybody pretends to have read but very rarely has. I don't even pretend to have read it."

"Yes, you and I are both politically ambidextrous extremists," John decided. "What a Zionist was lost to Zion when you plunged into the font! Ah well, this has been a good trip, my dear old Carian guest. You'll come up soon to Tigh nan Ròn? We shan't find it hard to tire our Hebridean sun with talking in late autumn."

"If all goes well in London with the family I might come

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towards the end of November," Julius suggested.

They parted at the dock. Julius went off to a pleasant old house in East Heath Road, Hampstead. John went down to Norfolk to collect Corinna and transport her to Tigh nan Ròn in space, and in time to the close of the twelfth century.

Toward dusk of a foggy frore November afternoon James Maxwell and a brawny young man called Tom Fletcher were walking along in the shadow of the Houses of Parliament, now one, now the other carrying an old-fashioned portmanteau.

"Tom, it's easy," said Maxwell.

"Easy? It's too easy," Tom Fletcher exclaimed. "The old boy in a gown never gave us a second look. Not even when the two of us were carrying the blooming bag as if it was full of lead. You ken, Jamie, the English are awfu' stupid. I'm telling you. Mon, I've been working down here in London three months now, and I'm really staggered sometimes by the stupidity of the English. All the same, we'll take a bus back to my rooms. Anybody's more noticeable in a taxi and the police might be making enquiries presently."

"Ay, they'll be doing that right enough," Maxwell agreed, "when the Stone's gone. Gosh, what a commotion!"

"Mon, I don't believe they'll know it's gone unless we tell 'em ourselves," Fletcher chuckled. "We were standing there gazing at it for a full ten minutes without a keek in our direction from anybody. If we can do what we did this afternoon with two of us, what will eight of us be able to do on Wednesday and a car waiting just outside? Here's our bus. We'll have to sit with this blooming bag on our knees."

At Tom Fletcher's lodgings in a cracked stucco crescent in Lower Holloway he and James Maxwell sat down to a high tea which suggested that the landlady was a Scotswoman, as indeed she was.

"You'll gang away quietly after your tea, Jamie," said the host. "The ither boys winna be here till half-past seven and you'll no' be seen that way."

Tom Fletcher had been Mr South's link with the third circle of the Airs when the secret society was formed in Glasgow, and

when he had gone down to London his group had been transferred to another knowing only James Maxwell, and Fletcher had been empowered to gather another group for the general direction of whose activities, although personally unknown to any of them, James Maxwell was equally responsible. This was the reason why it fell to Mr South to make the journey down to London for the proposed rescue of the Stone of Destiny from Westminster. There had been a bit of an argument between him and his colleagues, or rather with Mr East (or Hugh Goudie) and Mr West (or Andrew Lawrie), before unanimity was reached about this step: but Alasdair MacPhee's passion had won, and to James Maxwell was accorded the honour and glory of superintending through Tom Fletcher the actual removal of the Stone from the Abbey, and the arrangements for the first car that was to bear it as far as the end of the Eir bankment. Here another car was to bear it to another rendezvous in the Midlands and so on in a zigzag until the Border was reached, where no less than twelve cars would bear it back and forth in Scotland until at last Hugh Goudie would receive it from Willie MacIntyre, the only one outside his three peers of the Airts who knew him. Hugh Goudie had a rendezvous with Alasdair MacPhee and Andrew Lawrie in Alasdair's car. Then Hugh was to garage the car in which he had driven to meet Alasdair and be called for by Willie MacIntyre, and with Alasdair and Andrew drive to the secret spot where the Stone was to be buried.

"I'm going to give the four of them a dram to wish success to Wednesday," Tom Fletcher announced.

"Not too many drams, Tom," James Maxwell advised. "Drink the drams when St Andrew's Day is past. That's my advice. I'll drink a dram with anybody, but I'm not so fond of drams doing a business like this until it's all over."

"Ah, to-day's only Monday," Tom Fletcher reminded him. "It'll no' do the four of 'em any harm to have a dram. They're grand lads; I'm telling you, Jamie. Oh, mon, mon, what a day Wednesday is going to be for Scotland! After more than seven hundred years! You ken, it's pretty tremendous that."

"Ay, it will be pretty tremendous if all goes well," Maxwell agreed, and then he took the spoon and slowly stirred his tea. He was thinking of the Abbey that afternoon, of the sightseers awkwardly reverent, and of the poets and the politicians in stone. He

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remembered reading somewhere that it had been his presence in the Abbey at the funeral of some famous Englishman which had persuaded the present Archbishop of Canterbury with the force of a sudden conversion that the Anglican Church had a better claim on his adherence than his own Church of Scotland, and that ministry in such a Church would be a more profitable dedication of his personality to the service of God than he could hope to achieve in the law-courts or upon the stage.

"Ay, a Scot begins to realize what he's up against in a place like yon Westminster Abbey," he said moodily to his host.

"Don't fash yourself, Jamie," Tom Fletcher adjured. "We're not up against it all that much. If you and I could carry out that bag without anybody speiring at us, eight of the boys will manage all right on Wednesday to get away with the Stone between them."

"Och, I wasn't thinking so much of Wednesday next," said Jamie Maxwell. "I was thinking of the seven hundred years in between. Blast it, Tom, you've got to hand it to the English. Ay, we had Bannockburn, and after that what?"

"The Irish did not have as much as that," Tom Fletcher reminded him loftily.

"No, and I'm thinking it might have been better for the Irish that way, Tom. We've lived on Bannockburn ever since. The old lady shows her medals! Losh, it would take a Scot to write yon piece of sculduddery."

"It's not only battles that count, Jamie. Mind you, I'm no' pretending it's anything for a Scot to be proud of, but I think the English can be unco ashamed that they've only had a couple of Prime Ministers in the last forty years. The rest have all been Scots bar one Welshman."

"Ay, and there have been a hell of a lot of good Scots footballers bought by English clubs, Tom. It paid *them* all right. It didn't do much good to their own country."

"Och, I'm not arguing it's anything for a Scot to be proud of. Only you seemed kind of overawed by Westminster Abbey, Jamie. I wasn't. Not a bit. I was thinking all the time when I looked round me this afternoon that it was bigger but no sae much better than the War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle, and I'm not sae fond of that, seeing what the war did for Scotland. Did you ever hear

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yon crack about Lloyd George's homes fit for heroes? 'It 'ud take a hero to live in one of them right enough,' somebody said. I thought that was good, Jamie. Oh boy, I fairly laughed when I heard that yin. But see now, and finish your tea. I want you to be away before the lads arrive. And dinna fash yoursel' about the whisky, Jamie. I've got only one bottle and five tough Scots never got fou' on a bottle of post-war whisky whatever bloody colour the label was. Well, I'll be seeing you on Wednesday, Jamie, in Cremorne Road, and when we've handed over the Stone to you we'll advertise our car as much as we can right along the North Road until the police open the bag and find it full of Ronnie Fleming's clothes. If I want to get in touch with you meanwhile, you'll be at Fuller's Hotel, Iuston Road: is that right? I won't come near you even over the phone unless something has gone wrong. Oh, boy, Scots wha hae! I'm telling you, Jamie, when I get yon Stone into the car it'll just weigh no more than the wee feather of a throstle. Cheerio then, Jamie. And I'll be seeing you."

At the same moment as Ronnie Fleming was the first of the four members of the third circle in contact with Tom Fletcher to reach his lodgings in that cracked stucco crescent of Lower Holloway, Andrew Lawrie sat down in the corner of a Glasgow bar with the fourth whisky he had had since his tea. Miserably dispirited though they might be nowadays, four whiskies in such quick succession were enough to elate Andrew Lawrie unduly even if he had not been already so highly elated by the prospect of the excitement in which he was to play a major part during the next three days. The chief conspirators had agreed to avoid one another's company as much as possible as the time drew near for the great attempt, and Andrew Lawrie was finding that the secret was weighing heavily upon him and that the suspense was becoming almost intolerable without a confidant. Whisky seemed to alleviate the strain. After three or four drams the various contingencies which were crying out for discussion appeared less urgent and time was not so fretful. John Barleycorn was able to keep him amused till the bar closed and he could go back to his digs and with a night's sleep bring the great day so much nearer. This evening would no doubt have

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taken the course of the evenings for the last week if Davie Balfour of the *Glasgow Daily Advertiser* had not happened to come into the bar just as Andrew was proposing to finish his fourth whisky. Davie Balfour was a contemporary of Andrew's at the University and pretty pleased with his job as a reporter on the staff of the *Advertiser*.

"Hullo, Andrew, how are you keeping?" the newcomer enquired with what always seemed to his erstwhile fellow-students now involved in the job of earning their living in offices or school-rooms an affectation of enjoying a freedom denied to them, an affectation, moreover, that was coloured by a suggestion of condescension.

"I'm keeping all right, Davie," Andrew replied, eyeing the tall rather good-looking young man in a rich brown Harris tweed overcoat with as much stern nonchalance of expression as his own pale-blue eyes already slightly paler under the influence of alcohol could command.

"Here, put those remains to bed and have one with me," Davie Balfour invited.

"No, I don't think I'll have another, Davie, thanks all the same," said Andrew.

"Get away with you. Of course you will. And a double one at that. Or will you have a brandy?"

"Oh, Goad, no, Davie! I've had plenty whisky already this evening."

Davie Balfour came back from the bar with the two doubles and seated himself by Andrew.

"Here's here," he said.

"Here's . . . here," said Andrew with just too much deliberation, and stung by what he was fancying a gleam of amusement in Davie Balfour's dark eye he drank his double down at one gulp and bade his companion drink his down and have one with him now.

So it was at Andrew's sixth whisky in less than an hour that Davie Balfour asked him how the Scottish Nationalists were getting on.

"The movement is spreading every day," Andrew affirmed, with a touch of alcoholic pomposity.

"In which direction?" Davie asked sarcastically.

"What do you mean, in which direction? In every direction,"

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Andrew proclaimed on the verge of truculence.

"Keep your hair on, Andrew. I was only enquiring in my professional capacity."

"Keep *my* hair on, Davie Balfour?" he spluttered. "It'll take more than you to make me lose my hair, ay, or change the colour of it."

"All right, all right, Andrew," Davie Balfour said soothingly. "Have another with me, and we'll drink the health of the National Party."

"I'll have another with you, Davie, but I'll not drink to the National Party with a bloody North Briton like you."

So Andrew swallowed his seventh whisky, and then, because he did not intend to be one down on any bloody reporter in Glasgow, he ordered two more doubles, which made his eighth.

"Och, I understand fine your feelings about the National Party, Andrew," said Davie Balfour. "You feel the same way about them as the Press feels."

"What d'ye mean by that observation?" Andrew demanded, sitting back to gaze with concentrated fierceness at Davie Balfour's finely chiselled nose under the impression that he was staring directly into his eyes and quelling their mockery by the sternness of his own.

"Och, just that they never do anything, never get anywhere, just blether away about statistics. That's all right for the correspondence columns of the *Herald*, but it doesn't make a front page spread for the *Advertiser*."

"Statistsics? Statistics I mean. What the hell do you know about sastistics, Davie? You know what your circulation is—or rather what you say it is—compared with the circulation of the *Record* or the *Express* or rather—or rather what *they* say it is, and that's all you know about . . . statistics."

"Good enough, Andrew boy," said the reporter cheerily. "I'm not quarrelling with you about statistics, but you can't make Scotland an independent nation on statistics. Not that I'm losing any sleep about that. Personally I think independence would be a big mistake. All the same I was quite glad when they elected a Nationalist Lord Rector last year. We all were. Och, it gave us something to write about. But what's happened since? You won't make Scotland independent because the new Lord Rector

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presides over the University Court in a kilt. You've got to do something, you Nationalists."

"Do something? *Do* something. How the hell do you know we aren't going to do something?"

"You want to bring some romance into the National Party. It's too dam' respectable, too canny."

"Just because you've got the same name as one of Robert Louis Stevenson's heroes, Davie Balfour, that doesn't give you the right to blether to me about romance," Andrew maintained wrathfully. "Do you think that there's no Nationalist activity going on outside the National Party? Goad, the whole country is alive with underground activity."

"Lousy with it, eh?" the newspaper man laughed. "Have another, Andrew?"

"Not just yet, Davie. Not just yet," Andrew said austere. "I'll go a bit slow for a wee while. I don't want to make you intoxicated forbye, and if you don't know what that means, it means drunk, you long-legged scribbling b——r."

Davie Balfour leaned back and laughed heartily.

"Oh, gosh, Andrew, you're in great form to-night," he declared. "And are you one of the moles?"

"Am I one of the moles? Call me a bloody mole, Davie Balfour, and I'll sock you one in the jaw."

"Are you part of the underground activity?" the reporter asked, trying not to laugh aloud.

"Look, Davie Balfour," said Andrew, leaning across the small circular table and endeavouring to hold the other's merry dark eyes. "I'm asking you something. Look. I'm not telling you anything. Look. I'm just asking. What would you do if you heard that the Stone of Destiny . . . you know what I mean by the Stone of Destiny?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, don't look so omniscient. You newspaper fellows are about the most ignorant set of illiterate witnits in Scotland. A tinker's a walking dictionary compared with you. But all the same I'm glad you do know what the Stone of Destiny is, because maybe presently you'll be glad you do know what it is."

"Is that so?" the newspaper man asked casually, appraising Andrew from under lowered lids and wondering whether this was

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the moment to press upon him another whisky. He decided he was prime for killing as he was and that another whisky might launch him into incoherence. "Is that so?" he repeated, with a studied indifference.

"I'm not telling you, Davie Balfour. I'm asking you. What would you do if you heard that the Stone of Destiny was back in Scotland where it belongs?"

"I wouldn't believe it," the newspaper man answered at once.

"You wouldn't believe it?" Andrew echoed indignantly. "You have the nerve to sit there and say you wouldn't believe it? Why wouldn't you believe it, you pig-headed ink-slinger?"

"Because I don't believe the National Party of Scotland has the guts."

"What's the National Party got to do with it? Let them wear out the seats of their breeks as they like. None of them will ever put his lazy a—e on the Stone of Destiny. Gosh, no! Never! We're not bringing back the Stone of Destiny as an office stool for the Committee of the National Party—Council I ought to say," he concluded with what he believed was a sardonic smile.

"We? Who's we?" asked the reporter quickly.

Andrew sat back and nodded at him a taunt for his ignorance.

"Ay, you'd like fine to know, Davie. Losh, you'd be the *Advertiser's* white-headed boy if you knew the answer to that one."

"But this secret society . . ."

"Who said anything about a secret society?" Andrew asked suspiciously.

"I thought you did."

"I didn't."

"All right. There's no need to get annoyed, Andrew. Have another dram."

"Ay, you're cunning right enough, Davie Balfour, but you're not so cunning as what I can be. You'd never find out what this secret society is if I drunk Glasgow dry to-night."

"I wouldn't dream of trying," Davie assured him. "I'm not the one to take an unfair advantage of a friend."

"You used to think yourself pretty smart at the Union when you'd try to score off me," said Andrew, sullenly reminiscent for a moment.

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"Och, that was just give and take, Andrew. There was many a time when you'd make me look a bit foolish."

"Ay, I believe there was," Andrew agreed, complacent now under the easy flattery of the other's manner. "Ay, I mind one or two occasions, Davie, when you thought you had me and when it was me who had you," he chuckled.

"That's right enough. It was often like that. Who's the head of this secret society?"

"Goad, Davie," said Andrew contemptuously, "I'm not such a gowk as you look."

"As I look. And I'm not such a gowk as to believe in this secret society of yours. Yes, you'd like fine for me to put a sensational paragraph in the *Advertiser*, wouldn't you? And then get me the sack, eh? See any green, Andrew?" And with his forefinger he lifted an eyelid for his companion to express an opinion. "Besides," he went on, "if you think you're going to persuade me that there are enough go-ahead Nationalists able to lift the Stone of Destiny, let alone carry it up to Scotland, you won't succeed."

"I won't, eh?"

"Can you take the breeks off a Hielandman?" the newspaper man asked.

"I wouldn't be clown enough to try."

"All right, Andrew, all right, for the purposes of this argument I'm a Hielandman."

"So you think there are no Nationalists in the country with more guts than the Council of the National Party?"

"That's just what I do think, Andrew. And it's a pretty widely spread opinion. Who's the head of this secret society?"

"Oh, gosh, Davie Balfour, you seem to think I've got a mouth on me like Donald Duck. I'll tell you one thing, though. It's not Cunninghame Graham."

"It's not, eh?"

"No, and it's not Hugh MacDiarmid either. Nor the Lord Rector of the University. And it's not Archie Beaton."

"Is it John Ogilvie by any chance?" the reporter asked suddenly.

The other blinked.

"Why the hell would it be John Ogilvie?"

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"Oh, I just wondered."

"Well, you wondered wrong," Andrew Lawrie told his interrogator. "But while you're wondering, you newspaper chaps, you'll wake up one morning perhaps and wonder why you're alive. Ay, there's quite a few of you been marked down."

"Marked down by whom?"

"You'll find that out in due course," Andrew Lawrie proclaimed with a touch of portentousness, for he was rapidly coming to the conclusion that he had severely frightened Davie Balfour and was enjoying a sense of power.

"You're not going to start shooting?" the reporter asked, sensing the other's mood and playing up to it.

"I'm not going to say anything about that," said Andrew mysteriously. "One way or the other. There's a lot of people in Scotland going to find things out presently. The Glasgow Baillies for one. And the Lord Provost. And some of our grand Members of Parliament."

"It all sounds very exciting."

"It'll be a darned sight more exciting than it sounds," Andrew prophesied. "I'm telling you, Davie."

"And where are you raising your funds? Or is that an indiscreet question?"

"Have *you* ever had anything to do with a secret society, Davie?"

"Never."

"I thought not. Otherwise you wouldn't ask such a pack of fool questions."

"Well, they say *in vino veritas* . . ."

"Who do?" Andrew demanded fiercely.

"Och, it's a proverb, isn't it?"

"Proverb my foot, Davie. Folk who quack like that are just showing off. You've known me a long time now, Davie, and you ought to know by now that I'm not impressed by just showing off. I despise it."

"Have a jock and doris. I must go round to the office."

"What office?"

"The paper."

"Ay, you're very superior with all your old pals, Davie. You'd like them to believe that you're a free man. But, my Goad, I never have to go to my office at eight o'clock in the evening. Losh, if

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Imperial Chemicals tried to get me to an office at eight o'clock at night Imperial Chemicals would lose my services. I'm telling you."

"Come on, what about this last one for the road?"

"Ay, if you let me pay for it, Davie. I'm not going to be under an obligation to anybody. Not even for a small whisky."

"Make it a double and each shall pay for himself," said the reporter, who was anxious to be off."

Agreement was reached.

"*Alba gu brath!*" Andrew toasted, rising unsteadily to his feet.

"Is that the name of the society?" the reporter asked.

Andrew grinned fatuously.

"And one more question. Have you collected any arms?"

"Arms? Of course we've collected arms. Arms and legs both."

A minute or two later Andrew Lawrie, chuckling inanely to himself, was making his uncertain way through the foggy Glasgow night toward his digs in Langside, and David Balfour was hurrying toward the editorial offices of the *Daily Advertiser*.

"What do you Scottish Nationalists think you're playing at now?" one of the assistants asked of Hugh Goudie when he came stumping in that Tuesday morning to the big Glasgow bookshop where he worked.

"What do you mean?" the swarthy young poet snapped.

"Have you not seen the *Advertiser*?"

"What the hell would I see the *Advertiser* for, Carstairs? I've better uses for my eyes than staring at stale tripe."

"Well, there's a whole screed on the front page about this plot to bring the Stone of Destiny back to Scotland," said Carstairs. "I thought you might know something about it."

"My God, I'd have to know more than the contents of this shop if I knew anything about the muck served up by the *Advertiser*," Hugh Goudie muttered, thanking heaven for a complexion that made sudden pallor insignificant as he felt his heart jump a beat. "Have you got a copy of the rag?"

Carstairs pulled a copy of the paper from his pocket and offered it to his fellow-assistant.

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SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS ON WARPATH PLOT TO SEIZE THE STONE OF DESTINY AMAZING SECRET SOCIETY WHO IS UNKNOWN LEADER?

The *Daily Advertiser* is in a position to reveal the existence of an amazing plot which once more confirms the old adage that truth is stranger than fiction. This amazing project is nothing less than a carefully organized attempt by extremists of the National Party of Scotland to seize the Stone of Destiny under the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey and bring it back to Scotland. It will be remembered that in A.D. 1296 Edward I, the King of England, removed it from Scone to Westminster in order as he believed to secure for his successors thereby the throne of Scotland in accordance with the ancient prophecy that coronation upon the Stone ensured supremacy. Scottish Nationalists contend that the clause in the treaty between Scotland and England after the defeat of Edward II and the English invaders at Bannockburn which provided for the restoration of the Stone to Scone was never fulfilled. What they do not remember is that the failure to fulfil that clause is believed by many to be the reason why a Scottish King in due course inherited the English throne, and undoubtedly any successful attempt to remove the Stone from its present resting-place would seriously perturb those many Scots who feel that they have more than a small share of Imperial responsibility.

ALBA GU BRATH

The *Daily Advertiser* is not yet in a position to give full details of the amazing secret society which exists in our midst, but our readers can rest assured that every effort will be made by the journal, whose proud boast it has been always to put Scotland first, to bring the subterranean activities of this society into the open light of day.

Meanwhile, it can be stated authoritatively that the name of the secret society is Alba Gu Brath, that membership of it is widely spread all over the country, and that its object is to bring about the complete separation of Scotland from the British Commonwealth of Nations. Whether Alba Gu Brath draws its secret funds from Moscow or Dublin or both is not yet certain, but no doubt this will transpire in due course.

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IS ARMED

What is of immediate importance to the guardians of law and order is that Alba Gu Brath has already been able to amass a considerable store of weapons, and no doubt the authorities will prosecute the most searching enquiries and adopt the most active measures to relieve public anxiety upon this point. The notion that some quiet house in a Kelvinside terrace may be an armoury of secret weapons will be strongly resented by the citizens of Glasgow, and they will expect and will have the right to expect protection against the misguided patriotism of a band of fanatical young men.

AND READY TO STRIKE

It appears that many personalities prominent in our national life to-day have been marked down by the members of Alba Gu Brath for suppression if not for a worse fate. The *Daily Advertiser* has reason to understand that the Lord Provost of Glasgow together with many of the Councillors and Baillies will be among the first to attract the sinister attention of Alba Gu Brath. Certain Scottish M.P.'s too are mentioned, as liable to feel the effects of the secret society's hostility, but the *Daily Advertiser* is not yet in a position to mention the names of any of those deemed particularly obnoxious to what is described as the Republican group within the National Party of Scotland.

THE CHIEF

The actual head of this amazing secret society is naturally not an easy matter to ascertain, but the *Daily Advertiser* has reason to believe that he is a prominent Scotsman. It is only right to say at once that the names of the Duke of Montrose, Mr Cuminghame Graham, the Lord Rector of Glasgow University, Mr C. M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid), Mr Archie Beaton (Gadfly), and Mr Maclean Sanders do not conceal the identity of the secret chief.

On another page a leader headed 'WHITHER, SCOTLAND?' expressed the editorial reaction to the news:

The *Daily Advertiser* has never wavered from its declared policy of supporting any vital expression of Scottish feeling

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consonant with the strictest preservation of the links which unite us with our English friends over the Border. We believe that the Union between Scotland and England has been a major blessing for the whole human race. Scots are proud to sustain to the full their responsibilities as members of the great British Commonwealth of Nations. If we have had occasion in the columns of this journal to criticize sometimes what we have considered faults and delays in the administration of Scottish affairs due to the increase of bureaucratic interference which was brought about largely as a result of the war, that has only been because we feel that the situation requires nothing more drastic than an improvement of the liaison between local authorities and Whitehall. We do not advocate so revolutionary a step as moving the Scottish Office to Edinburgh, but we are of the opinion that there is scope for one or two minor adjustments in the administrative machinery which if made would go far to satisfy the natural desire of the country to feel that the just requirements of a loyal partner are not being neglected.

If concern for the well-being of Scotland is the mark of Nationalism, then the *Daily Advertiser* proudly proclaims itself to be the mouthpiece of all genuine Scottish Nationalism. When, however, Scottish Nationalism is debased to serve the purpose of stirring up political passions and introducing into the country subversive behaviour utterly alien from the true spirit of Scotland, the *Daily Advertiser* feels impelled to denounce such action as un-Scottish and un-British; and when such agitators hide their faces behind the black mask of secrecy the *Daily Advertiser* will do its utmost to tear that black mask away. By calling itself Alba Gu Brath this deplorable society suggests a Gaelic origin and the *Daily Advertiser* repudiates on behalf of its many Gaelic-speaking readers, whose language has been recognized by the half-column daily allotted to it, any Gaelic sympathy with subversiveness. We are profoundly convinced that no more loyal body exists than the Gaelic-speaking subjects of H.M. King George V, and it has been a source of pride that the efforts of this journal to support the language of Eden and the garb of old Gaul were so genuinely recognized in the enthusiastic welcome accorded to our special illustrated supplement published every day during the National Mòd at Fort William this autumn.

On another page is told the story of the projected attempt to remove the Stone of Destiny on which from time im-

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memorial have been crowned our Scottish kings, of whom let it be remembered his present gracious Majesty stands as high in the devotion of his loyal subjects as any of his august predecessors. That such an attempt will meet with the ignominious failure it deserves goes without saying, but the *Daily Advertiser* believes that it has performed a useful service by dragging this conspiracy from devious, dark and hidden ways into the light of publicity.

In that belief the *Daily Advertiser* will continue oblivious to threats from whatever quarter they emanate to pursue its task of exposing this wild plot to disturb the tranquillity and practical commonsense of the Scottish people.

Hugh Goudie flung the paper down with an ejaculation of disgust.

"When will the shooting start?" Carstairs asked, grinning.

"Before those morons of the *Advertiser* have learned to be wise, and that's never," Hugh Goudie snapped.

"Have we got any books about the Stone of Destiny?" Carstairs asked. "We're bound to get an enquiry or two during the day."

Hugh Goudie was scornful and sceptical outwardly, but within he was on fire with curiosity to know how the *Advertiser* had found out what was in the wind, and he cursed the need which kept him in the shop until he could get hold of Alasdair MacPhee and Andrew Lawrie to consult about the immediate future.

Andrew Lawrie usually beguiled his journey in the tram every morning with the *Daily Record*; on that November 29th the newspaper shop was already sold out of *Records* and he accepted an *Advertiser* instead. It was a murky morning, but when he settled down to read his paper and looked at the front page he had a momentary impression that the tram had exploded in a flash of blinding light and that he himself had been blown inside-out. He recovered his faculties sufficiently to read through the sensational paragraphs, and then looked hard at his fellow-passengers, half-expecting to see them in a state of convulsion. When he saw that they were bound for the day's work, all wearing the usual expression of stolid boredom at the prospect before them, he tried to persuade himself that less harm had been done than might have been. This consolation was fugacious. He read through the sensational paragraphs again and then turned to the leader page. He groaned in-

wardly. No doubt about it. The harm done must be faced up to, and he himself was unquestionably the sole cause of it. He tried to recall just what he had said to Davie Balfour the night before. That mention of the Stone of Destiny was the worst part. If nothing had been said about that it wouldn't have been so bad. No excuse except those nine whiskies (and they were no excuse) for saying anything at all to anybody, particularly a newspaper man; still, if he had kept his mouth shut about the Stone all that people would know was the existence of a secret society vowed to restore Scotland to living nationhood. And that might be all to the good. People wanted stirring up. He looked round the tram. Ah, it would do them good. Just a lot of sheep, that's what they were. *Let* them look under their beds for bombs. *Let* them think the shooting might begin at any moment. There was no harm in that, no harm at all. Suppose the police made enquiries? What would they find out? Andrew imagined himself under the third degree, though it was a bit difficult to imagine the kindly Glasgow police as experts of the third degree. 'We'll say no more about it, Lawrie, if you'll tell us the names of your associates?' 'Never.' 'Come on now, be wise, man. We dinna want to put you in gaol.' 'You can put me where you like. Andrew Lawrie doesn't betray his friends.' 'It would be an awfu' pity, Lawrie, to lose your job with Imperial Chemicals. It would break your puir mither's heart. And your dad'll never hold up his heid again in Kilmarnock.' 'My mother and my father would sooner I lost my job with I.C.I. than turn traitor. Do you think they'd hold up their heads in Kilmarnock if Andrew Lawrie's name went on the list with Menteith and MacLeod of Assynt and Murray of Broughton? You're wasting your time, sergeant. Do you think I'm afraid of Barlinnie gaol? No, nor Peterhead if it comes to that, sergeant.' 'I'm telling you.' If he faced up to the police, the police could do nothing. That was certain. If it came to that, he could always say he was pulling Davie Balfour's leg. Outside Alasdair and Hugh and Jamie there was only Sandy Bain who knew him, and Sandy didn't know the other three. *Alba Gu Brath!* And that stuffed Jessie, Davie Balfour, thought it was the name of a secret society. The ignorant clown! . . . 'I'll gie yon Davie such a sock in the jaw when I see him next. Reporter? He won't be able to report a Sunday School excursion to Luss when I've finished with him. Drink a

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man's whisky and then sneak round to a bloody newspaper office and sell a friend for a couple of guineas! Why, an Edinburgh fellow wouldn't do that.'

But presently indignation with Davie Balfour's outrage upon conviviality gave way to the gloomy and ever gloomier reflection that it was his own hideous indiscretion which had been responsible for imperilling the success of to-morrow's enterprise. The date which was to be for ever glorious in Scottish history had been obliterated beforehand by a few drams of whisky. As he dragged his heavy way up to Blythwood Square on that murky morning, Andrew Lawrie felt that the only chemical he wanted in all that vast agglomeration of them he served was enough prussic acid to put him quickly out of his misery. When the office closed he would go and confess to Archie Beaton his folly and ask his advice. Gosh, how Archie Beaton would jeer, he sighed hoarsely as he turned into the building in which he served.

While Andrew Lawrie was reproaching himself in Blythwood Square, Alasdair MacPhee was driving as furiously south down the Great North Road as such an adverb can be applied to the progress of a Baby Austin. He had finished his rounds in the glens of the West and on the previous evening he had reached a small farmhouse between Newtonmore and Laggan where he had spent the night with Roderick Macpherson, who was his link with the rest of the group of the Airts he controlled as Mr North. To Macpherson he had given his last instructions for the meetings with the various cars that were to cover the trail of the Stone once it reached his part of Scotland, and then just as he was getting ready to start for Glasgow Roddie had shown him that morning's *Advertiser*.

"What's the programme now, a *bhalaich*?" Roddie asked. He was a lanky, long-nosed, loose-limbed young man in grey tweed and plus-fours with the distant far-away look in the eyes that shepherds get from searching distant hillsides for their charges.

Alasdair MacPhee swore a Gaelic oath, and then he turned to English. "Damn! Damn! Och, hell, Roddie, the game is spoilt. What fool has been talking?"

"The police in London will likely be on the look-out now," Roddie murmured.

"Ay, and those down in London won't know," said Alasdair.

"Will they not be seeing the *Advertiser*?"

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"Ach, the *Advertiser*—who the hell would be seeing the *Advertiser* in London?"

"Is the man you have directing everything down in London to be trusted?" Roddie asked.

"This stuff in the *Advertiser* never came from London, Roddie. This stuff was written with whisky in a Glasgow bar."

"Is that so? Ay, I dare say it would be. It's a pity right enough to go and spoil everything for a dram too many," Roddie Macpherson commented. "Have you any fancy who it might be?"

Alasdair MacPhee's countenance darkened.

"I've a notion between two, and a bigger notion of one," he said. "And by G——, I'll . . ." he put a hand up to loosen his collar. "Och, well, I'll be away, Roddie."

"If there's nothing doing, Alec, you'll send me word?"

"I'll telegraph 'Regret biscuits ordered not available.' It's just as well to be a bit cautious in case the police know more than you'd think they would from those lovely revelations."

"Och, well, there's one thing, Alec. Even if what was to be done in London won't be done at all now, a bit of good can often come out of a big bit of bad, and the boys who don't know the worst of it will be pretty pleased to find it's they who've frightened the *Daily Advertiser*. It'll do a lot of good, Alec. I'll bet you, one at least of my four section-chiefs will be on at me to provide him with the necessary weapons to annihilate the Inverness-shire County Council. Och ay, it will stir up quite a lot of enthusiasm, sure as death."

Before Alasdair MacPhee reached the immediate environs of Glasgow that afternoon early editions of the *Evening Echo* which belonged to the same group of newspapers as the *Daily Advertiser* was on sale. The tale set going by the latter was taken a step forward, and the *Evening Echo* was able to enjoy a triumph over rivals like the *Evening News* and the *Evening Times* whose big brothers of the morning had failed to provide them with such a treat and who by the agreement reached among newspapers that dog does not eat dog were denied even the pleasure of deriding their colleagues' reckless sensationalism.

Alasdair MacPhee pulled in his car beside the pavement to read in the *Evening Echo*;

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The whole of Scotland has been greatly perturbed by the amazing revelation of a plot to seize the Stone of Destiny engineered by an amazing secret society called Alba Gu Brath or, in English, Scotland For Ever. We cannot refrain from congratulating our enterprising contemporary the *Daily Advertiser* on the initiative it has displayed in unearthing this serious menace to the well-being of our country. Long may the tradition of the Press as a loyal and fearless upholder of law and order display such bright examples of devoted and courageous support as that exhibited by our active contemporary the *Daily Advertiser*. Opinion in Glasgow is indignant at the developments revealed in the trend of extreme Nationalism. The general feeling is that the hidden hand of the I.R.A. is visible in this un-Scottish resort to political methods reminiscent of the condition of Ireland during and after the Great War. Such methods are distasteful to the Scottish temperament. Some of those interviewed by the *Evening Echo* representative felt that the revelations published this morning in the *Daily Advertiser* savoured strongly of attempts by Moscow to disturb the domestic peace of Britain, and indignation was freely expressed at Scotsmen lending themselves to such anarchical projects.

"If indeed they are Scotsmen," a well-known Glasgow business man observed pungently.

There has been much speculation about the identity of the unknown chief of Alba Gu Brath. A representative of the *Evening Echo* called at the University to obtain a statement from the Lord Rector, but was informed that he was not expected in Glasgow until next week. It is confidently anticipated in University circles that he will deny any knowledge of Alba Gu Brath.

Mr Cunningham Graham refused to make any statement over the telephone beyond expressing his opinion that the whole business was a mare's-nest. This was also the opinion of Mr Maclean Sanders, the well-known Edinburgh antiquarian, who added humorously that if it was not a mare's-nest it was a very bad egg.

Mr C. M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid), the Scottish poet, who is to address a St Andrew's rally to-morrow evening at Paisley, said he only wished it was all true, but he had grave doubts whether there were half a dozen men in the whole of Scotland capable of even dreaming of restoring the Stone of Destiny, let alone of carrying the project through. An at-

tempt to get into touch with Mr John Ogilvie, the well-known dramatist, failed owing to the lack of facilities for communicating with the Shiel Islands where, it is understood, he is at present in residence.

DISCLAIMER BY THE N.P.S.

The Secretary of the National Party of Scotland has issued the following statement from the Head Office:

"The President, Chairman, and Council of the National Party of Scotland take the strongest exception to the suggestion published in a Glasgow morning paper to the effect that an alleged secret society is recruited from members of the N.P.S.

"The National Party of Scotland, while holding firmly to its demand for the restoration of a Scottish Parliament sitting in Edinburgh, denies absolutely any intention to encourage any form of action which partakes in the slightest degree of the methods attributed to this alleged secret society. The National Party of Scotland relies entirely upon the force of public opinion as the sole means by which its objective will be attained, and repudiates in the most emphatic terms responsibility for any kind of action like that alleged to be contemplated by an alleged secret society. The imputation that the N.P.S. is under the influence of extremists is intensely resented by the large majority of its members, who recognize that such imputations are cast with the sole object of discrediting the National Party."

Alasdair MacPhee put the paper in his pocket with an exclamation of disgust for the so obvious pusillanimity of the Party communiqué, and soon afterwards stopped the Baby Austin outside Archie Beaton's bungalow.

The old rebel smiled blandly when the angry visitor came into his sitting-room.

"I thought I would soon be seeing one of you," he said in Gaelic. "Well, well, there's only one thing which surprises me, Alasdair."

"What's that?"

"How the devil it didn't happen before. I've never known a secret kept so long in Glasgow."

"It would have been better if it hadn't been kept until now. It would have done less harm. It's just now that makes it so bad.

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Do you think the police in London would be notified by to-morrow?"

Archie Beaton took a pinch of snuff.

"They're pretty stupid, the police, right enough," he said, "but I doubt if they'll be so stupid as not to pass the word to London to take a few extra precautions. You see, if they didn't and the Stone did vanish, they'd get the blame. And there's nothing McTavish of the *Advertiser* would like finer than a good chance to skelp the police. He and the Chief Constable had a bit of a row last year and this would give him his chance to score a good one. You can depend upon it whoever it was gave all this long rigmarole of nonsense to McTavish will have been sent round to tell the police where and how he got hold of it. Well, Scotland Yard's pretty handy for Westminster Abbey. I wouldn't give any suspicious characters observed to be loitering with intent to commit a felony much chance to-morrow. You see, the I.R.A. have given the English police some fine practice in this sort of stunt. Och, I think it would be foolish to go on with it now?"

"You think it would?" Alasdair asked miserably.

"I know it's just one hell of a terrible disappointment for you, *a bhàlaich*," the old rebel replied, without a touch of mockery. "But, well, there it is, there it is. These things happen when one starts to fight against odds. I've had some big disappointments myself that way. Many an 'if' has turned to 'off' just because it is such a very conditional proposition. If somebody had not opened his mouth too wide, you might have had the Stone; but somebody did open his mouth, and there you are."

"I've a pretty good notion who it was too," said Alasdair bitterly. "Blowing, that's what it was. Blowing! Just blasted Lowland blowing!"

"Ah, Alasdair boy, there's other things blow besides Lowlanders. Winds and whales and . . . Highlandmen sometimes," the old man added gently. "You know, it's surprising the police haven't paid a call on me," he went on. "It occurs to me that they're lying low just to see if there may be anything in this Stone of Destiny business. It would be as well to send a warning to Jamie Maxwell that everything's postponed. There's one thing that would be even more disappointing than not making the attempt and that would be to make the attempt and fail. And to my notion the only chance of success was to take them completely unawares. Oh, well, well,

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well, it's a pity right enough. I was really staggered by the way the secret was being kept. I'd never expected it would be."

"I might get through to Jamie Maxwell on the phone to-night," Alasdair suggested.

The old man shook his head.

"There's no bigger Judas than the telephone, Alasdair. I wouldn't trust the telephone if I was you."

"And the telegraph's not much better," the young man ad led. "Unless you've a good code. Luckily I arranged to send Roldie Macpherson a message about biscuits if, as I knew in my heart it would be, the whole thing was off. But we never arranged any code with Jamie. Anyway, he's an obstinate chap and if he doesn't see the *Advertiser* and the *Echo* he may not pay any attention to what would have to be a pretty vague kind of a warning."

As Alasdair said this Hugh Goudie's characteristic step was heard on the gravel path outside, and a moment later he came striding into the room.

"I'm glad you're here, Alec," he said, the dark eyes blazing in that pinched swart face. "This is a fine damned business. We'd better have your advice, Mr Beaton." He stumped across the room and flung himself down in a chair. There were beads of sweat glinting on his forehead. He had evidently not spared his lame leg on the way from the tram stop. "I hope Andrew'll be along soon. I sent a message to his digs to meet us here."

"Maybe he won't come, Hugh," said Alasdair bitterly.

"You can't assume it was he who opened his mouth, Alec. That's not a fair assumption, is it, Mr Beaton?" Hugh asked.

"No, no, that's bringing prejudice into it," the old man agreed.

"Who else would it be?" Alasdair demanded hotly. "Is it Willie MacIntyre?"

"You'll damn well take that back," Hugh Goudie shouted, springing up. "You'll take that back, Alec MacPhee. I'll not hear any man cast a doubt on Willie MacIntyre's loyalty. If every man in the Airts was a Willie MacIntyre, by gosh, we would have had the Stone back by now."

"Och, sit down, Hugh," Alasdair told him wearily. "I'm not in the gallery of a theatre. I don't want to be bellowed at. I never did think it was Willie MacIntyre. Any more than I think it was Roddie Macpherson. There's only two left now. Sandy

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Bain and Andrew. Is it Sandy Bain? You know fine when Andrew suggested Sandy Bain for the second circle that all of us agreed he was just the very chap to balance Andrew's little peculiarities."

"I think we'll have a cup of tea," said Archie Beaton. "Tea warms the body and cools the mind."

They were sipping their tea when Andrew Lawrie arrived.

It was his custom after his day's work was done to change into those voluminous plus-fours of his, but this evening he was still in the black coat of the clerk, and he looked so wretched that both his colleagues knew at once that he was indeed the one responsible for the mess, and yet they pitied him. Archie Beaton merely smiled blandly.

"Sit down, sit down and have a cup of tea, Andrew. You're looking pretty washed-out. Did you have a hefty night of it last night?" he asked.

"Oh, Goad, I was so drunk that I made a complete ass of myself," Andrew groaned. "I'm sorry. It was all my fault. I'm sorry. I can't say any more than that. I feel I'd just like to go and throw myself into the watter. It was Davie Balfour. I got drinking with him in Jock's Bar, and I must have said something about the Stone of Destiny. I know I didn't mention any names. That I can swear to. Och, I know I've spoilt everything by putting them wise to what we were planning. But I feel pretty sure that's all the real damage I did. I resign from the first circle. I'm not fit to hold such a responsible position. The best thing you can do is to co-opt Sandy Bain in my place. He's a grand chap. He'll never let you down like I have. I can't say any more. I'm fairly through."

And then he dropped down into the nearest chair and with his red head between his knees cried like a tired child.

"Ach, well, it can't be helped," said Alasdair awkwardly."

"Och ay, it's just the way things'll happen sometimes," said Hugh, getting up and stumping heavily about the room in his embarrassment.

"What I think I'd best do," Alasdair suggested, "is take the train down to Euston and warn Jamie to call the whole thing off."

"That's the best thing you can do, *a bhalaich*," Archie Beaton agreed.

Andrew's small blubbered countenance lifted from between his knees was gazing at them miserably.

"Oh Goad, I'll never be able to look Jamie in the face again," he moaned.

"Cheer up, Andrew," Archie Beaton urged. "You'll look back when you're my age on a great many setbacks to revolutionary activity. And I'll tell you something else. When you get to my age and look back on fifty years and more of revolutionary activity you'll find out that you might just as well have spent your time whipping a top. In fact better. You *can* make a top spin faster, but the world keeps its own pace so far as you're concerned."

"I appreciate your kindness, Mr Beaton," the wretched Andrew muttered. "But there's nothing you can say that'll prevent me thinking just now that I'm a blot on the face of the earth. I couldn't be convinced of anything else. I couldn't really. And what's Mr Ogilvie going to think of me? I've just chucked away a hundred pound of his. Just chucked it away. You can't tell me any different. I'll sock Davie Balfour in the jaw right enough. But that's just locking the stable door after the horse is stolen." He groaned. "I don't know why I was ever born. I don't really."

"How many whiskies did you have, Andrew?" Hugh Goudie asked.

"Eight. Four of them doubles. And then another one for the road. Gosh, I wish I'd had two for the road and then I might have been run over by a tram."

Andrew groaned again.

Small hotels in the purlieus of the great railway termini of capital cities have a tendency to be raffish, squalid, and uncomfortable. Fuller's Hotel in Euston Road was a rare exception, for it was respectable, clean, and homely, and it had sheltered many a young Scotsman on his first arrival in London until he had had time to look round and find permanent lodgings. It was kept by a Mrs Fortune, herself a Dundee woman but the widow of an Aberdonian, a happy mixture of frugality, kindness, efficiency, and good cooking. She was a portly figure fond of bombasine and of aprons that combined utility with a hint of coquettishness. In an earlier age

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she would have been famous for her caps.

"I'm afraid we'll not have a room free till the evening," she told Alasdair MacPhee when he presented himself at the hotel in the twilight of St Andrew's morning. "But if you'd like a wee bittie breakfast there's porridge and Finnan haddie and plenty good Dundee marmalade. I'm sure you'll be wearying for something inside you after your journey. They're sae awfu' wearisome, these night journeys."

"I was wanting to see Mr Maxwell—Mr J. Maxwell," said Alasdair. "And then I'll take some breakfast, please."

"Mr Maxwell? He's upstairs in his bedroom. He'll be dressing himself just now. He was called a wee whilie back. Will you not wait till he comes down? You can sit in the coffee-room. There's a nice fire burning there. I'll send up and let him know you're here. What name will I say?"

"MacPhee."

"MacPhee! Are you a MacPhee then? And my own grandmother was a MacPhee. She came to Dundee from Coll when she married my granddad who was in the fish trade."

Alasdair told her his own father was from Coll.

"We'll likely be cousins, you and me," she speculated. "Oh, it's a wee, wee worldie. If you weary for an egg with your haddie, just say so. They're scarce and verra, verra expensive just now, but never mind for that. It'll be a pleasure to gie one to a MacPhee. She was a beautiful old woman was my grandmother. The Reverend Macintosh would always come and talk a wee bit Gaelic with her. She'd try to teach us children the Gaelic, but my father was always against it. He said it was a big waste of time. He thought it interfered with our arithmetic. You'll have the Gaelic yourself maybe?"

"Plenty," Alasdair assured her.

"And where's your home now? I'm sure I'll be sounding terribly inquisitive, but it's not every day I see a MacPhee of Coll, and my own grandmother a MacPhee of Coll."

"My people's home is in Inverness."

"Ah, there's a bonny place indeed! I think Inverness is as bonny a town as ever I saw in all Scotland. And I'm not forgetting Broughty Ferry when I say that. Ay, I believe Inverness is very nearly as bonny as Broughty Ferry."

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It was at this moment that Jamie Maxwell came downstairs and interrupted Mrs Fortune.

"Your breakfast will be ready just as soon as you sit down," she told them. "And I'll tell Maggie to lay a place for Mr MacPhee."

"Alec!" Jamie Maxwell exclaimed. "What brings you to London?"

"I'll tell you over our porridge, Jamie."

"And tea or coffee, Mr MacPhee? I know it's tea for you, Mr Maxwell."

"I'll take coffee, please," Alasdair told her.

"That's always a sailor's choice," Mrs Fortune observed as she steered her portly shape toward the kitchen. "They're terrible fond of coffee, sailors are."

The coffee-room of Fuller's Hotel was not large, and it was well filled with solemn Scotsmen, the majority of them making the most of the only real meal they proposed to eat until the welcome scent of high tea greeted them at the end of their day's work.

"You'd better read these, Jamie, and then you'll guess what's brought me to London," Alasdair told his friend as he put yesterday's *Advertiser* and *Echo* beside his plate. "I tried to get this morning's *Advertiser* at Euston to see what more there is, but I couldn't get one."

Jamie Maxwell read through the papers.

"That accounts for something unusual they noticed yesterday," he remarked when he had finished.

"What was that?"

"Just half a dozen extra police on duty."

"We can't discuss it here. Wait and let's get through our breakfast," said Alasdair.

"We'll have to go up to Tom Fletcher's place. It's against the idea we started out with for him to see you. But he's an obstinate kind of chap, and he might think I'd just got the wind up if I called everything off on my own."

"That's what we thought in Glasgow about you, Jamie. That's why I came down to talk matters over. It was clear we had to call it off, but we didn't think you'd agree to that without a reason."

"I'm glad you came, Alec. I think I'd probably have understood you had good reasons, but Tom might not have thought so. Tom's whole heart is in it, and yet to hear him talk you'd think he

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was just making arrangements for a football match. By the way, I've had an offer of a school, Alec, at last."

"You have. Where?"

"A wee place in Eskdale called Kirkrose. Archie Beaton will laugh. Set off to bring back you know what and return with a desk in the school of Kirkrose. He'll have a right to laugh."

"He was pretty good about all this business. I'll tell you presently. Will Tom Fletcher be in when you go round to see him?"

"Yes, he arranged he'd be in his rooms all morning. His office thinks he has a day off for urgent family business."

On the way to Lower Holloway in a taxi Alasdair related the story of Andrew's indiscretion.

"It was in my very bones, Alec, that this business would be spoilt by a dram too many," Jamie said. "I was worried about Tom's party. I thought they might start in drinking and spoil everything. I needn't have worried. I suppose it does make any attempt out of the question."

"Och, sure it does, Jamie. Willie MacIntyre and Sandy Bain will have cancelled all arrangements for the cars anyway, and I sent a telegram to Roddie Macpherson before I left Glasgow. If extra police were noticeable at Westminster yesterday you can lay there were plenty of plain-clothes men. And they'll be there again this afternoon. We wouldn't have a chance of getting the Stone out if people were expecting such an attempt. Surprise was the essence of the whole business. It was our only chance of success. I hadn't the heart to say much to Andrew. I couldn't help thinking it might just as easily have been Hugh. You never knew Norman MacIver, the tailor of Melvaig up in Assynt. He died last year. He took a hefty one when the mood was on him, and I remember he once said to me he believed he might have done something for the Highlands if he hadn't dreamed of doing so much when the drink was in his brain. I could take a good one myself right enough, and Norman said to me if I carried on with it I'd have a fine head and no heart when I was sober and a fine heart and no head when I was drunk, until I was forty, when I wouldn't have heart or head. So I gave up except for a very occasional wee dram. All right, Jamie, I was lucky to get advice from the finest natural Highland rebel bar Archie Beaton I'm ever likely to meet. If I

hadn't met Norman MacIver it might have been me just as well as poor Andrew or Hugh."

"I know, Alec. I was pretty fond of a dram myself. I don't think I ever blethered the way Andrew can blether when he's pickled, but that's only because it didn't take me that way. I always want to throw people about. Long before I'd had eight whiskies Davie Balfour would have landed on his backside across the bar. Or else, if I'd not thrown him over the bar and had another instead, he might have gone through the window. The more I drank the further I always wanted to throw people. I came to the conclusion I might throw a body too far one day, and I put myself on a strict allowance. I expect Andrew'll have had his lesson now."

"And so have we so far as Andrew's concerned in the future," Alasdair said sternly.

"You could never trust him again?"

"Never so long as I live," Alasdair declared with a fervour that his companion recognized as unquenchable.

They dismissed the taxi at the corner of the turning before Verona Crescent and walked along to Tom Fletcher's lodgings.

"This is Mr North, Tom," Jamie Maxwell said, introducing his friend.

"I'm pleased to meet you, Mr North. Will you take a chair, please?" said the brawny fair-haired tenant of this room which looked out on a semilune of sooty grass dotted with a few begrimed privet bushes and scraggy Portugal laurels.

"We have bad news for you, Tom. You'd better read these," Jamie Maxwell said, handing him the papers.

From the other side of Verona Crescent a knife-grinder's voice offering his services was borne upon the reasty November air into the sitting-room, the walls of which were covered by a faded blue flock paper patterned with the tarnished half-obliterated gilt of what had once been an elaborate vegetation.

"That's why there must have been those extra cops yesterday afternoon," Tom Fletcher commented. "Ah, well," he said, grinning suddenly, "never mind, boys. Do or die. We'll give them a run for their money."

"I'm afraid it's impossible now, Mr Fletcher," Alasdair told him, with the old-fashioned ceremoniousness that young Scotsmen affect

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toward one another before they become Jock or Robbie. They leave to women the eighteenth-century habit of addressing them by their surnames without a prefix.

"How impossible, Mr North?"

"I think you're entitled to know my name. I'm Alec MacPhee."

"How impossible, Mr MacPhee?"

"Because we can't afford to fail. We'd be the laughing-stock of the country ourselves, and worse, we'd make our cause a laughing-stock."

"Ay, we mustn't fail, that's right enough, Mr MacPhee," Tom Fletcher muttered gloomily. Then he brightened again. "But why the hell would we fail? I've studied the situation in Westminster Abbey for the last month, man. I've even dived down on my knees the way all these English folk do with their 'Lords have mercy on us' and suchlike and contemplated the situation through the cracks in my fingers. And I tell you, Mr MacPhee, there's nothing required except a bold dash for it."

"You can dash as boldly as you like, Tom," Jamie Maxwell put in. "But if they have six policemen outside the west door you'll not dash very far. I know it's enough to make a body sick with disappointment, but there it is, Tom. And we can't afford to fail."

"So I'll have to tell Ronnie Fleming and the boys that the ploy is off?"

"That's just what you will have to do, Tom. Would you mind if Mr MacPhee and I stayed here till you come back? We can't talk very easily at the hotel, and it's not much of a day for walking about the streets."

Tom Fletcher went to the window and looked out.

"You're right, Jamie. I never saw a more rotten dead-alive sort of a day in all my life. Not even on a Sabbath. Any knives or scissors to grind? Losh, it's a pity yon poor melancholy bastard can't grind the claws of the Lion. Ay, or put a sharp point or two on the Thistle. Who was it opened his mouth?" he turned round to demand suddenly.

"It might have been one of several, Mr Fletcher. We'll have to go into that later," said Alasdair. "I decided to take the night train because we didn't think it fair to call the business off without explaining why it was necessary."

"Och, well, I'll be away and tell the boys it's all just a bloody wash-out," said Tom Fletcher. "It may take me the better part of the morning. Will you be here when I come back?"

"If we aren't, come and have tea with us at my hotel at half-past six," said Jamie Maxwell. "We'll be going back to Glasgow to-night, Tom."

"Good enough. I'll be seeing you. I'm afraid I haven't a dram to offer you."

The two visitors said if he had they would not drink one.

"All right, then, cheerio."

A moment or two later the front door slammed behind Tom Fletcher and from the window they watched him striding along the pavement of that cracked stucco crescent, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his greatcoat and something in the turn of his head that suggested he was whistling.

"There's one thing," Jamie Maxwell observed. "You can't keep Tom Fletcher gloomy for long. He was near sick with disappointment, but if we tell him at tea we think it would be a good notion to kidnap Ramsay MacDonald and ransom him for the dissolution of the Union, Tom would have the whole operation cut and dried in a fortnight. He's a grand fellow."

"Jamie, I'm through with ploys," Alasdair exclaimed fiercely.

"I wasn't serious about Ramsay MacDonald, Alec."

"Yes, and I'm through with the Airts the way we're running it now," Alasdair went on, pacing up and down the worn carpet of Tom Fletcher's sitting-room. "Och, let it go on for clowns like Andrew to keep the *Advertiser* and the *Echo* in copy for their readers. It won't make a bad smoke-screen. But I'm sick of sitting round blethering about adventures like people in a book. We laugh at the National Party, Jamie, with their raffles for tea-cosies and their silver collections and their Bannockburn demonstrations and their tin-pot Parliamentary candidates so surprised to find their names in print that they think the sun rises in their a——s, but by G——, Jamie, *we've* no right to laugh at anybody. We're just a bunch of playboys. No wonder Archie Beaton grins. If he didn't grin he'd have to greet. We're behaving as if we had all eternity before us to make Scotland a living nation. We haven't, Jamie. Scotland is dying, and within a few years Scotland will be dead. How do you restore a dying man to life, Jamie? By blood

transfusion. Do you hear me, man? By giving your own blood. There's no other way. There's no other way at all. Some of us must die that Scotland may live. I'm through with anybody who isn't prepared to make the sacrifice of blood as those Irishmen made it in 1916. I'm not going to lay forth now on the way to make the sacrifice. I'll think hard for a while yet, and, Jamie, you can think pretty hard driving through Glenshiel or Glencoe in the winter moonlight. And when I've thought it out I'll tell you, Jamie, and I'll tell Hugh, maybe, and yes, Willie MacIntyre and Roddie Macpherson, and I believe I'll tell Tom Fletcher, and it would just be up to everyone of you to say 'yes' or 'no' to what my plan would be. I'd think none the worse of any of you if you shook your heads. That's God's honest truth I'm telling you, Jamie. None the worse at all would I think of you. You'd just go your ways and I'd go mine. You're feeling pretty sore, aren't you, Jamie, this morning? You're disappointed, eh? Well, suppose we'd planned to shoot our way out of London with the Stone, we wouldn't have called the whole business off for the sake of half a dozen extra police. It would have been annoying right enough for an *amadan* like Andrew to open his mouth to this reporter chap, but it would not have made any difference to us, if we had said we would have the Stone back or die. Or would it, Jamie?"

Alasdair stopped and swung round to face his friend with the question.

"I suppose it wouldn't, Alec. No, in a way I suppose we'd have been glad to see the extra police. The only thing is they wouldn't have been armed, and it would go against me to shoot an unarmed man. It would go against Tom Fletcher too. I'm sure of that."

"All right, we'll leave that question on one side. That's one of the questions I have to argue out with you myself by myself. I don't know what the answer is yet. In fact I don't know anything except that I am ready myself to give my own blood to Scotland. That's fixed firm in my mind, anyway, even if I give it alone. I don't want to hear any of your arguments, Jamie. Keep your arguments till I have mine cut and dry. Maybe I'll take quite a long time yet. Here, it's too hot with that blessed gas-fire in this room. Come on out. I'm choking in here, just choking. Let's go down to Westminster and take a look at the Stone."

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"Wouldn't it be as well to keep away from it just now?" Jamie suggested.

"Hell, you're not sitting at your desk in whatever godforsaken Border village it is you're going to teach the youth of Scotland. You needn't be so canny about it. *A Dhia*, they don't yet arrest a man for dreaming a felony even in this country."

So the two of them went to Westminster and the minor gratification of being shadowed round the great fane by two obvious detectives.

"Why, they've put clamps round it," Alasdair exclaimed, when he saw the Stone.

"They've always been there," Jamie told him.

The two detectives drew closer with an elaborate indifference to what might be their prey.

Alasdair turned round and smiled at them.

"*Pòg mo thon*," he murmured, his eyebrows slanting.

As they came out of the Abbey, Maxwell asked him what he had said to the detectives.

"I invited them to kiss the noblest portion of my anatomy, Jamie."

Mrs Fortune was distressed to hear that Alasdair was not going to spend the night at her hotel.

"And it's St Andrew's night," she said reproachfully. "I'd planned we'd have a wee party in my own sitting-room and celebrate it in the good old way. It's the first MacPhee who ever came to my hotel, and I was really looking forward to a long talk. I'll give you your bill, Mr Maxwell, but if you've a friend coming to tea with the two of you I must insist that the tea is on the house, and you'll please come along to my room before you go to catch your train and take a wee drammie to keep you warm."

Next morning when Alasdair and Jamie reached Glasgow they made haste to secure *Daily Advertisers* to find out what was being said now about the amazing secret society.

"I can't find anything about it," said James at last. "It's not on the front page."

"It's not on any page," said Alasdair in perplexity.

"There must be something," James insisted.

They turned over the pages again in the melancholy half-light of the Central Station on a dark December morning.

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"There's nothing at all," Alasdair decided at last.

Nor was there. Editorial excitement was now concentrated upon a competition open to all housewives for the bowl of porridge adjudged most palatable by a committee consisting of the Duchess of Atholl, the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Mr Walter Elliot, M.P., Sir Iain Colquhoun of Luss, and Mr Will Fyffe.

John had devoted himself to his daughter all that autumn, and his fiftieth birthday in October had been celebrated by giving her a first lesson in what against Mairi Macdonald's shocked insistency was held by weight of evidence to be the first language in which she had chosen to say something for herself. The Italian lesson had reversed the usual process by beginning with the prize which was a great volume of Doré's illustrations from the *Divina Commedia*, a companion to the *Don Quixote* she already had, for although Cervantes as an author was being anticipated under the System John was convinced that Doré was one of the major influences upon the imagination of a child, and after all *Don Quixote* himself was still in the Middle Ages.

"What does it feel like to be fifty?" Corinna had asked.

"Very like being forty-nine."

She sighed.

"I know," she said sympathetically. "I thought when I was ten I'd feel quite different, but I didn't. And when I am twelve next January I don't believe I'll feel very different from eleven. I think I'll feel different, though, when I'm thirteen, don't you?" she added hopefully.

"Well, we shall have a pretty interesting year when you're twelve. We're going to visit France."

Corinna had clapped her hands.

"Oh, how glorious! Is it a secret? May I tell Mairi?"

"Do you want it to be a secret?"

"Well, I don't really. I think secrets are rather uncomfortable things. It's like having a place that's tickling and you can't scratch it."

"I agree with you. I don't really like secrets myself. Yes, of course you can tell Mairi. Yes, secrets *are* uncomfortable. I think I'll have to tell you one I did mean to keep. I've made

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up my mind to fly for the first time and to let you come with me."

Corinna had been too much overwhelmed by this announcerment to clap her hands. Her mouth had just remained open, and her eyes turned to saucers.

"Father!" she had gasped at last. "Where shall we fly to?"

"To France. We'll let Mairi bring the luggage by boat, and we'll fly. I didn't mean to tell you till just before we were going to start, but I couldn't resist it. Are you glad?"

She jumped up to embrace him.

"You don't think you'll change your mind?" she had asked in sudden apprehension.

"I may not be able to keep a secret, but I can keep a promise," her father had replied. "I shan't change my mind. And you mustn't change your mind."

"As if I could change my mind about flying."

"I was thinking about French. You remember your resolution about the irregular verbs?"

And Corinna had sustained that resolution valiantly all through the autumn.

It was on St Andrew's Day that Julius Stern at last reached the island. He had been on the point of arriving at any moment after the middle of the month.

"I'm not convinced I shall adopt your method of existence, John," he declared when he stepped ashore from the *Flora*.

"It is a bit blowy this morning."

"A bit blowy this morning? It's nothing to what it was last night in that comic toy-boat of yours. What's it called?—the *Lochiel*."

"It was a bad crossing from Portrose, was it?"

"Bad crossing?" Julius echoed. "It was an unspeakable crossing."

Then he looked up to Tigh nan Ròn at the land's end. "But that's almost worth being sea-sick for," he added.

"The news from Germany doesn't sound too good, does it?" John asked as they made their way up to the house. "This Hitler creature seems to be taking the same line as Mussolini in demanding for himself and his party what will amount to a dictatorship independent of the Reichstag. Will old Hindenburg give way?"

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"I hope not, but Von Papen is one of the world's asses, and it's only a question of weeks in my opinion before he's completely discredited, and then what? By the way, what have you been up to, John?"

"Nothing in particular. Why?"

"What's all this Stone of Destiny business that seems to have shaken your country?"

"They've not . . ." John stammered. "They've not got it?"

"No, they haven't got it, but apparently the Press have discovered that they're going to try to get it. I have a copy of some Glasgow rag with me. I bought it yesterday on the journey."

In the library John read through the *Daily Advertiser* of the day before, fuming.

"It's a most extraordinary thing," he said, "that people cannot keep a secret."

"There is something in it, then?" Julius asked.

John told his friend about the activities of the Airs.

"I don't think you'll be a Scotch Hitler, John, unless you can train your tartan shirts a bit better than this."

"It is pretty crude, isn't it? Thank God we're not on the 'phone here. I should have had a jolly time of it yesterday with the Press."

Corinna came in at that moment to greet the visitor.

"I'm going to fly next year, Uncle Julius," she announced.

"Fly where?"

"To France. Have you ever flown?"

"Yes, I've flown across the States once or twice."

"Didn't you like it frightfully?"

"Hated it."

Corinna's face fell.

"You didn't really hate it, Uncle Julius?"

"Loathed it. I'm always air-sick. So will you be probably."

"Air-sick?" Corinna ejaculated. "Can you be air-sick?"

"Can you be air-sick?" Julius exclaimed. "And how! You wait till you're a few thousand feet up over the English Channel with nothing but a paper bag between you and public disgrace. I had a good laugh the other day, John, at Leicester Square Tube Station. A fellow was looking at one of those posters 'Join the Navy and see the world'. He turned to his pal, 'That's all right,

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or if you're really inquisitive, you can join the Air Force and see the next world.' "

By now Corinna was looking thoroughly worried.

"You won't listen to what Uncle Julius is saying, will you, Father?"

"All right, Corinna. It was a firm promise," he smiled.

Three days later the spy-glass showed that there was a stranger in the boat.

"I thought so," John muttered. "A reporter, I'll bet."

But it was not a reporter. By this time the amazing secret society had gone the way of the Carbonari so far as the Press was concerned. It was Detective-Inspector Cameron, a tall, plump, pinkish man with an oval countenance the egginess of which seemed somehow accentuated by a horseshoe moustache.

"I'm very sorry to intrude upon you like this, Mr Ogilvie," he said in a soft Wester Inverness accent, with a diffident smile. "But I've been instructed to make some enquiries about a matter which had a lot of publicity in the Press a few days back. I daresay you'll have seen the papers?"

"I saw the *Advertiser* of November 29th."

"You didn't see the *Echo* that same evening?"

"No."

"I have a copy with me if you'd kindly look through it. You'll read your name is mentioned in connection with a certain matter."

"I don't see why the fact that the *Echo* couldn't communicate with me over the telephone should be presumed to connect me with this preposterous fantasy," said John when he had read through what the *Echo* had to say.

"Quite so, quite so, Mr Ogilvie," said the Inspector in soothing tones. "I can very well understand you might feel a bit annoyed. Och, we didn't pay any attention at all to it in Glasgow, but the War Office got on to us, and that's just how it was."

"My friend's a very dangerous man, Inspector," Julius put in. "I think the War Office were wise."

The detective tittered, for that was the timbre his light tenor voice gave to a chuckle.

"Och, we know more about him in Glasgow, sir. We never would have bothered him about all this foolishness if we hadn't been worried by the War Office. We used to have a lot of trouble with

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them in the war. Just a pest they were to the police. Just a proper pest. M.I.5 and all that nonsense. And they're still at it. Och, yes, they're holding out in the hope of another war. Have you the Gaelic, Mr Ogilvie?"

"*Beagan, beagan.* And a very little at that. I can read it fairly well."

"Can you indeed? Look at that now," the Inspector exclaimed in admiration. "That takes a bit of doing, that does. I don't read it too well myself, though I'm a Lochaber man and couldn't speak hardly a word of English till I went to school. Do you know Lochaber at all, Mr Ogilvie?"

"What Scotsman worthy of the name doesn't know Lochaber?" John asked with a smile.

"Ah, well, by jingo, that's a good one, Mr Ogilvie," the delighted Inspector declared. "That's one of the best I ever heard. My old dad would have been proud to hear that. Well, I believe it is a pretty good place, right enough. But I never heard anybody put it quite so neat as that before. What Scotsman worthy of the name doesn't know Lochaber? Ay, we put up a good fight for the Prince right enough."

Julius was looking puzzled.

"Prince Charles Edward the Inspector means," John explained.

"What!" his friend ejaculated. "I thought he meant the present Prince of Wales."

"Och, we'd put up a good fight for him too if he ever needed it. I like yon lad. I believe he has a pretty good notion of what this country wants. Yes, I joined the Glasgow police from Lochaber, Mr Ogilvie," the Inspector went on. "But I was pretty raw. I look back now at what I was like and I wonder how they ever put up with me. Of course, I wasn't quite so stupid as I looked. And I believe my looks helped me along. They used to stare at my feet and think I must be a detective, and then they used to stare at my face and think I couldn't be. I remember there was a Lewis man started about the same time as me—Mackenzie his name was. Och, a proper Cabar Fèidh, with a nose on him like the sharp end of a pickaxe and eyes like a *smeorach* . . ." He stopped and clicked his fingers . . . "och, dash it, what do they call yon bird in English?"

"Thrush or throstle," John reminded him.

"Ay, to be sure. Yes, yes, eyes like a throstle when she's look-

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ing for worms. And when this Mackenzie used to go into a bar in the Broomielaw there wouldn't be a word. They'd all know he was a detective. He gave up the force pretty soon, and I believe he's done very well for himself as a fish salesman now in Stornoway."

"You'll take a dram, Inspector?" John suggested, offering a glass.

"Thank you, sir. *Slainte mhath*."

"*Slainte mhoir*!" John responded warmly.

And the two hefty drams went down in a twinkling.

"My God!" Julius exclaimed. "Just like that."

The Inspector wiped his moustache and grinned benignly. Then he took out a notebook.

"Well, I suppose I'd better be asking you a few questions, Mr Ogilvie," he began diffidently.

"Ask away," John urged.

"Well, this so-called secret society, Alba Gu Brath. It's a good name right enough. *Tir nam beann, nan gleann, nan gaisgeaic*."

"What on earth's that?" Julius asked. "It sounds like a new explosive."

"Land of bens and glens and heroes," John translated.

"Ay, the very same, the very same," the Inspector agreed with satisfaction. "Well, would you ever have heard of such a society, Mr Ogilvie?"

"Never!" John declared positively.

"Perhaps you'll have your own doubts whether there was any such a society?" the Inspector pressed.

"I certainly should," John affirmed.

"And all this about secret stores of arms," the Inspector continued. "Would you think there was anything in that?"

"Where would the arms come from?" John asked.

"Och, I wouldn't say but what they mightn't be getting them over from the Free State."

John shook his head.

"It sounds like a fairy tale to me."

"Ay, ay, you've never heard of any such arms?"

"Never."

The detective made a note of this denial.

"And this business of carrying off this so-called Stone of Destiny from Westminster Abbey, do you believe there's anything at all in that? I never heard of the thing myself, but they seem a bit

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worried about it at the War Office."

"What I should imagine happened was this, Inspector," John replied. "Some fervid young Nationalist who'd had a few drinks probably expressed a wish to bring the Stone back to Scotland. Perhaps he even went so far as to brag that he and a few of his friends had made a definite plan, and when they found they had a gullible reporter they just piled on the agony. That's the best suggestion I can make, but it's only a suggestion."

The Inspector took some notes, and then asked John if he had ever been invited to be the secret head of a society.

"I'm sorry to have to ask you all those questions, Mr Ogilvie, but the fact is that Colonel Rossiter made a great point about that."

"Colonel Brinsley Rossiter of M.I.5?" John asked.

"That's him, right enough."

John turned to Julius.

"That's the fellow who got on to Emil ten years ago. I had a row with him in Ireland during the war when I was working there for a rival show. So Colonel Rossiter was anxious to find out if this business could be pinned on to me, was he?" John asked the Inspector. "He's an old enemy of mine."

"Look at that now," the Inspector exclaimed censoriously. "Well, I suppose I've no business to be telling you this, Mr Ogilvie, but what this Colonel Rossiter particularly asked was whether we could ascertain if at any time you gave a biggish sum of money to a Nationalist secret organization in Glasgow."

"I've subscribed to various Nationalist organizations at different times," said John. "And I hope to continue doing so without any nonsense from M.I.5. I don't pretend always to know how these subscriptions of mine are spent. But if you people in Glasgow can find out who the members of Alba Gu Brath are I'll certainly send them a handsome donation as an expression of gratitude for their having shaken up M.I.5."

"Not if they have firearms, Mr Ogilvie," said the Inspector with a frown. "Ach, I wouldn't have anything to do with firearms if I was you. Of course we had to get in touch with M.I.5 just in case there was anything in this business at Westminster, and I believe they've taken the necessary steps to guard this Stone, or whatever it is. We used to have the same thing years ago with the Suffragettes, and of course the I.R.A. gave us a bit of trouble.

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Well, thank you, Mr Ogilvie. I think there's nothing more I can ask you."

"I'll have to keep you waiting for a bit, Inspector, till I've been through my post in case there are any urgent letters to attend to. Then you'll have a bit of lunch with Mr Stern and me, and he *Flora* shall take you back. Meanwhile, you'll have another drink."

The Inspector held up his hand.

"No, no, thank you, sir. Not just now. I'll have a *deoch an dorus* before I'm away. May I take a wee walk round the island? You have a lovely place here. *Tha e snog gu dearbh*. Ay, ay, cosy right enough."

The Inspector took himself off for a walk, and John turned to his mail. Among his letters was the following:

EPHRAIM VILLA,
CHURCH AVENUE, PECKHAM, S.E.15
Dec. 1st, 1932.

Dear Mr Ogilvie,

I hope you will remember the pleasant meeting we had one day last year in the train in the course of which I was able, I trust, to convince you of the truth of British Israel. My reason for intruding upon you again is that a Glasgow friend of mine—a Mr McClure of Govan—has sent me cuttings from the Glasgow Daily Advertiser and Glasgow Evening Echo of the 29th ult. from which I learn that you may take more than a passing interest in the so-called Stone of Destiny which as you will doubtless know is the identical stone on which Jacob rested his head (Gen. xxviii. 18) when he beheld the heavenly ladder. Please note particularly in the same chapter verse 14 which is one of the signs by which Israel is recognized in the British race. The oil which Jacob poured upon the top of the stone is another sign. Is not oil used to anoint the Kings of England at their coronation ON THIS IDENTICAL STONE? Verb. Sap.

Mr McClure does not at all like the idea of removing the Stone from Westminster which without doubt is now the true Bethel of the British race. He is particularly anxious that nothing should be disturbed just now because undoubtedly we are on the verge of tremendous happenings and 1933 is the chosen year.

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Mr McClure asks me to inform you that the application of the Great Law over Britain reveals Britain as the Isles of Israel (Is. xlii. 4). The Isles shall wait for His Law.

Scotland contains the exact pyramid angle in that string of lochs which forms the Caledonian Canal, and the pi-ratio exists in the distance from Glasgow to London, which is 11 times $31\cdot416$, or $345\cdot576$ miles from Fairfield in Govan to the Tower of London. Fairfield is $3\cdot1416$ from the old Cross of Glasgow, the ancient centre of the city, whose motto is "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the word". Take a map of the British Isles and note the quaint design of the west coast of England with its mother, child, and the dog all interested in differing moods in the site of LUCIFER over the murdered Lusitania off the Old Head of Kinsale. Note also the position of Ulster to the rest of Ireland which is in Lucifer's Kingdom. Scapa Flow is outside God's Kingdom and situate in Lucifer's Flow, and that is the reason why it was defiled by the inverted fleet which he used during 1914 to A.D. 1918 as Number 666.

Mr McClure adds, and here I do agree with him absolutely, that the Earth expects the Second Advent soon. But wait a minute. Elijah must first come and restore all things. Where is he? Is he in Great Britain, the home of Israel?

It appears so.

Take London, the Tower and the heart of London, as London is the centre of the land hemisphere of this globe. On the outer wall of the Salt Tower in the Tower, next to the Tower Bridge, a huge cross has appeared. This feature is clearly shown in Ward Lock's Guide Book, plate 55.

The name English in Hebrew alphabet-numerical script of the Bible equals $31\cdot416$, or ten times the pi-ratio. Draw a circle around London of diameter $31\cdot416$ statute miles the centre on the Salt Tower. Select a cosmic angle $365\cdot25$ days of degrees, and divide by seven to get $52\cdot18$ degrees. Draw this angle line north-west until it cuts the circle at Bushey, Herts. The latter word is pure Hebrew for THE Earth. Look up a good directory. Is there an inn in Bushey? There is, called the Red Lion Inn. Take a hint from the grand gallery length of the Great Pyramid of Jezu or Giza in Egypt, which is $1883\frac{1}{4}$ British inches long, and call it the year A.D. 1883 and the odd quarter the month of March.

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Select a day, the Sabbath or Sunday, at eleven a.m. when every church bell in Merry England was ringing during a fall of pure snow. And the mother's name? Wait! That is the data. Is it correct? It is.

On Sunday morning at 11 a.m. on 11th March A.D. 1883 in the RED LION INN, BUSHEY, HERTS, during a fall of snow, there was born a man-child, and his mother's name was CHARITY—Ist Corinthian: xiii. It was a great PROTESTANT Family. Where are they to-day?

Well, as Mr McClure says, that's a stern fact for A.D. 1883 and he asks me to ask you what you are going to do about it. Undoubtedly Mr McClure himself has a very shrewd idea where this child is who will be fifty years old on March 11th next year. And he's obviously quite convinced he is no other than Elijah himself. I'm bound to say his arguments seem quite unanswerable to me. Now obviously Elijah's identity and whereabouts must not be revealed until the appointed time or it might play right into the hands of Lucifer which, you'll agree, would be more than a pity, would it not?

Of course all this in the papers about you intending to move Jacob's Stone back to Scotland may be an exaggeration or even an absolute falsehood. If it is, I hope you'll pardon the liberty I've taken in writing to you and put it down to my anxiety that nothing whatever should interfere in any way with the plan of the Lord God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (N.B. Jacob on account of the Stone) to manifest Himself at the Second Advent. I'm not in a position myself to say what would be the effect of moving the Stone, but undoubtedly my friend Mr McClure is most worried by the idea, and he's a man for whose opinion I have a very great respect. If you would care to contact him I'll write and ask him how he feels about contacting you, but he is a shy sort of chap and is rather averse to meeting strangers and so he may not agree. Perhaps you'll favour me with your views on this matter.

Anyway I would very much like to enjoy the pleasure of another talk with you myself, and when next you're in London I'd be really pleased if you'd drop me a p.c. saying where we could meet. I've a lot more interesting data I'd like to bring to your notice and a most interesting map of the Isles of Israel all beautifully worked

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out with the angles of the Great Pyramid and the pi-ratio, which is quite conclusive.

With every good wish,

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Gilbert Pullrose

John handed this letter to Julius, who read it through.

"A lunatic," he commented.

John shook his head.

"You can't dismiss these British Israelites so easily as that, Julius. One can call this creature Hitler a lunatic, but if he is you have to call the eleven millions or so Germans who have just voted for him lunatics also."

"I do," said Julius firmly.

"It's not so easy as all that," he insisted. "You might have called Luther a lunatic when he started, but I don't really think you can call every Protestant a lunatic. I agree that a letter like that bears all the superficial marks of being written by a lunatic, but this British Israelite belief is widely spread. I'm credibly informed that many of our most prominent admirals and generals are British Israelites. From time to time you'll see half a page or a page even in the advertisements of a newspaper with the status of *The Times* devoted to their propaganda. It is a widely held belief among the British race. Individuals like Pullrose and McClure may carry their belief to an extravagance of credulity, but that's true of any religion. I think that a man who believes Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare is wrongheaded, but I hesitate to call him a lunatic or an idiot because he cannot be convicted of holding a personal belief against the whole of the rest of the world. If I wake up to-morrow morning in the belief that I am a teapot or a poached egg or a giraffe and attempt to obtain a recognition of that from other people, I am certain to fail, and if I proceed to order my existence on the assumption that I am a teapot or a poached egg or a giraffe I shall be certified as a lunatic and removed from intercourse with my sane fellows. I could never be certified because I believed that the Ten Lost Tribes have reappeared as the British Commonwealth of Nations. Thousands of people hold that faith. Not a month goes by but I receive a pamphlet or a book not a whit less

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idiotic than that letter you've just read. The Church never attempted to identify heresy with lunacy. Heresy was a choice between orthodox and unorthodox belief, but it was always regarded as an act of freewill, never as determined by the functions of a disordered mind. If British Israelitism had manifested itself in the palmy days of the Holy Office I'm sure the Grand Inquisitor would have dealt with it sternly, but by the stake not by the padded cell. And let's face up to it, Julius, the Church has not yet recovered from its attempt to destroy heresy or the conscious and deliberate choice of an unorthodox belief by the savage methods of the Holy Office. The thousands of Catholic martyrs who were hanged, drawn, and quartered by Elizabeth occupy no position in the imagination of the average Englishman compared with the 300 Protestant martyrs burnt by Bloody Mary. Why? Surely because the Catholic martyrs are regarded as political rebels who were harshly punished only according to modern standards, whereas the Protestants who suffered are regarded as martyrs solely to their religious opinions. We don't burn people to-day, though it would never surprise me to find a German majority reintroducing the brutal penal methods of the past to eliminate a minority, and British Israelites run no risk of the faggots; but if a few of them were certified as paranoiacs it would count as martyrdom and British Israelitism would win thousands of converts. I tell you, Julius, this British Israelite nonsense could be the same kind of danger to the sanity of the world as the Aryan nonsense preached by these cursed Germans."

"I regard that letter as the letter of a lunatic," Julius repeated. "And I think it's a waste of time to discuss it."

"I regard the speeches of Hitler as the speeches of a lunatic," John retorted, "but don't forget there are all too many people in Britain who put their faith in that lunatic as a stabilizing influence for an economically distracted Europe. Did you notice the anti-Irish tone of that letter? That's only one expression of anti-Catholic feeling. My own conviction is that if Hitler gains power in Germany we'll find he'll be the greatest menace to the Church since Luther."

"But that letter was equally anti-German," Julius argued. "All that balderdash about the German fleet sinking itself at Scapa Flow."

"That's because these British Israelites are still seeing Germans

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in terms of the ex-Kaiser and the dead Emperor Francis Joseph. They still think that Germany is the Vatican's chief support. Wait until Hitler quarrels with the Vatican."

"What about Hitler's anti-Semitism?"

"Yes, that may be a corrective," John admitted.

The return of Detective-Inspector Cameron put an end to the discussion.

"Well, well, Mr Ogilvie, you've certainly chosen a beautiful place to live. I might find it a bit lonely myself, but I daresay you'll have plenty to keep yourself amused. Goodness, what a terrible lot of books! Have you read them all?"

"Not nearly," John told him.

The Inspector looked relieved.

"A man's head would feel a bit overcrowded with all those books inside it. Och, I like fine reading myself when I've finished my day's work. The wife gets quite annoyed with me sometimes. Ay, she will that. 'Goodness, Donald,' she'll say, 'you'll grow cross-eyed burying your nose in the paper like that.'" The Inspector tittered to himself. "Ah, well, they're strange creatures, women, right enough. Seem to live in a world of their own, you might say. That's a bonnie lassie of yours, Mr Ogilvie. Och, she walked round the island with me quite the thing, and my goodness, she has the Gaelic well. I was fairly struck with yon wee lassie. She's great on the birds. She tells me you've promised to take her up in an aeroplane next year."

"She talked about that, did she?"

"Och, we talked about everything under the sun. She's coming to tea with us next time she's in Glasgow. The wife and I lost our own little girl. She was only ten when she left us. We have two boys, though. And doing well both of them. The eldest is at the University training for a doctor, and his brother's going to Mr MacMeikan, the chartered accountant, when he leaves school. It's a big chance for him."

Soon lunch was announced, and when it was finished Detective-Inspector Cameron made ready to go back in the *Flora*. He was full of gratitude for the hospitality of his welcome on the island.

"And don't be bothering yourself about these little enquiries I had to make, Mr Ogilvie. It's all just a lot of nonsense, but I've enjoyed myself fine, and Fort William was looking grand yesterday.

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Plenty snow already on Ben Nevis."

"This communication came by the post," John said, handing him the letter from Ephraim Villa. "I think you should show it to the Superintendent. He might like to hand it over to Colonel Rossiter at M.I.5 for investigation. He enjoys sleuthing bugbears."

But John did not show the Inspector a letter he had received by the same post from Alasdair MacPhee:

15 CASTLE WALK, INVERNESS

Dec. 2

Dear Mr Ogilvie,

I'm sorry some people can't drink an extra glass without making fools of themselves. I'm sorry too your kindness should have been wasted. I would have liked to come and see you, but I thought it was better not. I won't come till I've made up my mind about something. It may not be for a fairly long time. I'm feeling just now like nothing at all. I only hope you'll understand that what I said to you that night at Portrose nearly two years ago was not empty talk. You have every right to, but I hope you won't. I can't say how sorry I am. Mr Archie Beaton asked to be remembered to you when I was writing to you next.

Yours for Scotland,

A. MacPhee

"That's not the letter of a lunatic," John said to Julius when they were back in the house after seeing Inspector Cameron aboard the *Flora*.

"If it is, it's the letter of a very discreet lunatic," Julius observed.

"That's from one of the young men who failed to bring off this coup."

"So I supposed."

"Julius, am I a lunatic?"

"I don't think so. You may be, of course. Some lunatics manage to hide their lunacy for years. There was a fellow in California whose lunacy wasn't discovered till he shot a drummer from Los Angeles."

"In your orchestra?" John exclaimed.

"No, no, John. A commercial traveller. It transpired at the trial that this fellow supposed himself to be Julius Caesar and had

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gone armed against conspirators for years. He saw this drummer, made up his mind he was Brutus, and decided to get in first."

"But didn't his friends know of this delusion?"

"Not they. It wasn't found out till the police got hold of his diary. He'd been hiding himself, as he thought, for twenty years under his own name, and not a soul suspected he wasn't perfectly sane."

"That letter I just showed you was from one the young men who had planned to get hold of the Stone at Westminster. I contributed £100 to the expenses, and I'm pretty sure somebody talked about that at the time, which would explain the enquiry from M.I.5. And I'm asking myself now after that letter from my British Israelite friend whether he and Mr McClure looking for Elijah with the angle of the Great Pyramid are not seeking something just as substantially probable as I looking for a new Declaration of Arbroath with the help of what some antiquarians declare is only a bit of Perthshire sandstone under the seat of the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey. Julius, if you didn't know me and you heard I'd contributed £100 to bringing back the Stone of Destiny to Scotland, would you consider me a lunatic?"

"I'd think you were a crank. In fact, knowing you, I still think on this subject you're a bit of a crank. I haven't seen any signs of Scotland's oppression. As far as I can make out the Scotch have just as much say in ruling their own country as the English and rather more say than the English in ruling England. There doesn't seem to me any parallel to be drawn from countries like Poland or Finland or Bohemia or Ireland whose freedom was taken from them in spite of themselves. Frankly I don't see how you're going to persuade the Scotch to break up a partnership out of which, so far as I can make out, they haven't done too badly. And anyway I think a whole lot of countries in Europe will have to get together pretty soon to fight the double menace of Germany and Russia. You know, they'll all look pretty darned funny if the Germans and the Russians do get together. I don't see where a free and independent Scotland will come in on that, or Poland or Finland or Bohemia or even Ireland."

"A free and independent Scotland wouldn't necessarily mean the isolation of Scotland in such a contingency," John argued. "But we've got to face the menace of Americanization as well as of

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Germanification and Russification, Julius, and the English are getting more Americanized all the time. As things are, that means the same for Scotland. I think in whatever direction we look man seems as determined as Esau to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. Everything for superficial comfort everywhere. Standardize humanity at a dead level of mediocrity. Better a slave with a full belly than a free man with his appetite unsatisfied. As with men so with nations. Yet I regard those small nations which emerged again from the war as the final justification for such a war."

"And you'll find it'll take another war to put them back where they were before the last one," Julius prophesied. "And after that a class war to put the urban proletariat on top. And after that a war between town and country because the victorious proletariat can't feed itself."

"And so on till what?" John exclaimed.

"So on perhaps until China is the centre of Catholic Christianity. They plan for centuries ahead in the Vatican. And you know, John, you and I do believe that the Holy Ghost inspires that apparently perverse piece of reactionary machinery, the Church."

"I shall go to Ireland next month," John announced abruptly. "I'll take young Padraig with me."

"John, John, you say that in just the tone in which Moses must have talked for years to my forefathers about Canaan."

"And then he never got there."

"That's the way with Promised Lands," Julius said.

Christmas was spent at Erpingham where Corinna stayed behind when John and Padraig left for their visit to Ireland at the beginning of January. After her birthday she was to spend the second half of the holidays with the Stern family in Hampstead and then she was to go on to her grandfather's house in Church Row until she was picked up there at the end of the month.

Padraig at sixteen and a half showed less inclination than ever to identify himself with his native country. De Valera had just dissolved the Dail when he and John reached Dublin, and the General Election was being fought throughout their visit.

"I never heard such a lot of nonsense talked in my life," he declared. "They none of them seem to understand there's any-

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thing outside Ireland except a sort of imaginary bogey called England which has nothing better to do than put a tax on imported Irish cattle to get back on the De Valera Government for refusing to pay these annuities which, as far as I can make out, they agreed to pay."

"I think the British Government has behaved with a good deal more pettiness than the Irish," John insisted. "And don't forget that De Valera made a remarkable speech last autumn when he was presiding over the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva."

"Do you believe in the League of Nations?" Padraig asked. "It doesn't seem to do anything really important."

"That's more or less what De Valera pointed out to them."

"Well, he's not setting the rest of the Council a very good example, is he? I don't see how he can lecture other nations if he can't get on with England himself."

"So long as England encourages and finances this outrageous separation of the Six Counties from the rest of Ireland you can't expect De Valera to be easy. This is one of the occasions when the famous English genius for efficiency or compromise has not worked and never will work. And you must remember that the men who hold the power in Northern Ireland represent the lowest degradation which party politics can reach. They are a small group of ruthless industrialists, as ruthless even as we breed, alas, in Scotland. They are men with no object in view except their personal enrichment at the expense of others. If that small gang of industrialists who have subsidized bigotry in Northern Ireland with the help of the subsidies they receive from England were exterminated tomorrow partition would not last five years. Partition is the fundamental issue between the Free State and Great Britain. All this argument about annuities has its real root in the larger question of Partition."

"But the people of Northern Ireland don't want to join the Free State, do they?"

"Certainly the majority don't at the moment, but that majority is not given a chance to look at the question clearly. It is continuously being poisoned in the interest of the industrial oligarchy. What is more, the people of Britain are never given an opportunity to get the true facts, and unfortunately they are too lazy to find out those facts for themselves."

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"Well, you must admit," Padraig argued, "that if English people listened to all that frightful nonsense we've been listening to at political meetings they would think the Irish more impossible than they do already."

"Padraig," John asked abruptly, "how much do you remember of that November day in 1920 when your mother was killed by Black and Tans?"

"I remember being frightened by the noise and smashing-up of the house and the shots."

"I wonder how much the prejudice against your own country was caused by the shock to your small self that day. After all you weren't old enough to understand who was responsible. You were just frightened. If you'd been a few years older you might easily have inherited from that outrage a hatred of the English who you would have known were the cause of your mother's death."

"It wasn't Englishmen who killed my father," Padraig pointed out. "He was murdered by Irishmen."

"And your father would have been a supporter of De Valera in this election, don't forget. The supporters of Cosgrave are the successors of the men who killed your father."

"Oh, well," Padraig said impatiently, "I'm not interested in either of them. Ireland will see very little of me when I'm grown up."

"Have you settled what you're going to do when you've finished with the University?" John asked.

"I think I'll go in for the Consular Service."

"You can't remember your father at all?"

"Not as an actual person," Padraig replied. "I remember him as a sort of presence, if you know what I mean."

"More as somebody who was father than as an individual; yes, I think I understand. I was just wondering what he would have said to me if he'd heard his only son was determined to become a British official."

"I'm keen to get a post in the Near East if possible."

"Is that my tales of the war?" John asked.

"A bit," Padraig admitted. "But I've got rather keen on Greek history and archaeology. Father Gregory is really responsible, I think."

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"I can't pretend I don't think you haven't chosen a good profession," John admitted, "because I think you have. But you may not get a job anywhere near Greece. You may be in Persia or still farther East."

"I shall be interested wherever I go," Padraig foretold confidently.

"You'll have to talk to my friend Emil Stern about it. He was in the Levant Consular Service. Have you told Ellen about this plan of yours?"

"Yes, she thinks it a jolly good idea."

They were to dine that night with Liam O'Falvey, an ex-Minister of the Cosgrave Government whom John had known for many years, and who had been a friend of Edward Fitzgerald until the Republican split with the Free State. It was a moist, blowy evening, and they decided the twenty minutes' walk from their hotel would be a good appetizer.

O'Falvey's house was set well back from the road in a sizable garden and approached by a drive between two thick shrubberies. Large evergreen trees behind absorbed much of the moonlight, and half-way along the darkened drive two men sprang out of the bushes with loaded revolvers and flashed a bull's-eye lantern on the visitors.

"What do you want here?" one of them asked roughly.

"We're dining with Mr O'Falvey," John explained.

Names were demanded, and when they were given the visitors were allowed to proceed on their way, it seemed with a certain disappointment.

"Good Lord, what a place!" Padraig exclaimed in disgust. "I suppose when we ring the front-door bell it will be opened by a butler with a machine-gun."

However, it was opened by a pleasant parlour-maid who welcomed them as cordially as if she herself were the hostess, and laughed when she heard what had happened in the drive.

"The pair of them will not be happy till they've had a chance to fire off those pistols of theirs at somebody," she declared. "'It's fine and fat you're growing, Larry Hare, just waiting around to murder somebody for a living,' I said to him the other day. 'And neither you nor Micky Driscoll there able so much as to bring in a bundle of sticks for the kitchen fire.' Mr Ogilvie and Mr Fitzgerald, isn't it? You'll be Irish," she said, turning to Padraig.

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"Yes, I'm Irish," he admitted, and communicated his lack of enthusiasm.

"You say it in a very English way," she told him, leading the way upstairs, and a moment or two after showed them into a large room lined with books where Mr and Mrs O'Falvey rose from either side of a log fire to greet them. O'Falvey was a small plump man about forty with fair curly hair, as unlike a scholar as a revolutionary, and he was both, though the revolutionary in him had been considerably softened by ten years of office in the Cosgrave Cabinet. His wife was a dark wisp of a woman with a voice as soft as the edge of the sea on a windless June morning.

"We had a warm reception in your drive, O'Falvey," John told him.

"Did you meet my guards?" the host asked, grinning. "They didn't treat you too rough, I hope?"

"Really, you know, Liam, it's a terrible way to receive our guests," Mrs O'Falvey protested.

"Beggars can't be choosers, my dear, and begod, so long as Dev allows all us ex-members of the Government a car and a couple of guardian angels to look after it and us, I'm not going to be the first to look a gift-horse in the mouth."

"So these are your official protectors?" John asked.

"They are. I don't know, if I lose my seat in this election, whether I will be considered worth the expense of further protection. I rather doubt it."

"You won't be defeated, Liam," his wife insisted gently.

"I'm not at all so sure. He's a cunning fellow is Dev. Old Nick himself won't grudge him the first three letters of his name. He'll gain enough seats to give him a clear majority over all parties, and perhaps that'll teach the British Government that a duty of 40% on their cattle won't teach the wild Irish to knuckle under over the annuities."

"I thought you Cosgrave people disapproved of withholding payment?"

"So we do, but that doesn't mean we can't laugh at the British for thinking they can beat Ireland with a 40% tax on our cattle. And, Ogilvie, Ogilvie, what kind of a government have you chosen for yourselves? Maybe it's as well Fianna Fail has taken them on. My heart would have been broken if I'd had to deal with . . . but

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we'll leave names out of it. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, and you sure have a government of dead men. Well, how do you find Ireland since you were last here?"

"No country changes so little," John replied.

"That's something to be grateful for in a world that looks like tumbling to pieces soon before our eyes."

"Frankly, I hoped it would have changed a little," John said. "Perhaps if De Valera gets this clear majority he may be able to show the rest of the world something."

"Begod, Ogilvie, you're the most obstinate political idealist I ever knew," his host avowed. "You'll have to argue about the future with Maurice Doyne. He and his wife are going to dine with us."

"If they aren't shot by your guards," said John.

"I'll tell you this, Ogilvie. There's no man in Ireland they'd love better to shoot."

"Maurice Doyne?" John exclaimed. "Why is he a popular target?"

"That last play of his upset them pretty badly."

"Surely if ever an Irishman had deserved well of the State, Maurice Doyne has?"

"That's just it, Ogilvie. He deserved too damn well of the Free State, and that's something like a crime nowadays."

"Indeed it is," Mrs O'Falvey murmured.

"As you'll see, Kathleen, when my constituents go to the polls next week," her husband prophesied. "Oh, well, what of it? At last I'll have all the time I want to work on the *magnum opus*."

"Your history of Scholastic Philosophy . . ." John began.

"Give it up, Liam. Drop it, my boy," a deep voice boomed in the doorway. "Drop it like the hot coal from hell it will appear to our enlightened censorship. How are you, Kathleen?"

Maurice Doyne, a dark burly bearded man in a suit of stained Donegal tweed, came forward to greet his hostess.

"Where's Sheila?" she asked.

"Sheila sends profound apologies, but Michael has ear-ache and she thinks she has to stand by. Why do kids have ear-ache so much more than grown-up people? They are not called upon to listen to nearly as much painful nonsense. My ears are entitled to ache, but why should Michael's?"

"Oh, dear, it's too bad about poor Sheila," Mrs O'Falvey

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lamented. "And now I will be the only woman."

"I'll ring up Mary MacManus," O'Falvey suggested.

"That bitter-tongued witch," Doyme ejaculated. "I see you're determined I will have ear-ache too. And for God's sake, both of you, before you worry about Mary MacManus introduce me to your guests. There were manners once upon a time in Ireland. John Ogilvie!" he growled, as he shook hands. "I hope you haven't come to Dublin with great expectations. The Muses have all taken the veil, and the purity of Irish youth is no longer in danger of contamination."

"This is Edward Fitzgerald's boy, Padraig," O'Falvey interrupted.

"Are you Edward Fitzgerald's boy?" Doyme said, shaking hands. "Well, I'm glad to meet you, even though your father, God be good to him, came as near to scattering what brains I have as any man yet. And for all the use they are to-day maybe it was a pity he shot wide. Well, Padraig, I suppose you've come back determined to avenge him, eh?"

"No, I haven't," said Padraig. "I think enough people have been killed in Ireland."

"*Domine, nunc dimittis!*" Doyme exclaimed in amazement. "A Republican who can forget! Ring up Mary MacManus, Liam, and tell her she'll not only get a better dinner than she deserves but a miracle into the bargain."

Mary MacManus was the sister of one of the Republican Volunteer prisoners executed by the Free State Government in 1922 as a reprisal. For ten years she had devoted her existence to sustaining the spirit of no compromise either with the supporters of the Treaty or with England. She was now a woman of thirty-five, the hard core of whose beauty was still remarkable, ravaged though it had been by a hatred which had wrought upon it more cruelly than age. She was tall and pale and very thin, her lips bitter-seeming and red as cranberries, her nostrils a-quiver as if the air she breathed was impure, and across her raven hair parted in the middle one dead-white tress above that arched forehead and those eyes dark as polished sapphires.

"It's good of you to come at the last moment like this, Mary," said Kathleen O'Falvey.

The bow of her mouth tightened to shoot an arrow.

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"I couldn't resist the pleasure of meeting Liam as a T.D. for the last time," she commented.

"You can't discourage me," the candidate assured her. "I've said good-bye in my fancy to the Dail for ever just as I said good-bye to office when we lost the last election, even though I did keep my own seat. Mary, this is John Ogilvie who is full of romantic illusions about our country, and this is Padraig Fitzgerald whose father you'll remember. He was killed in '22."

"Edward Fitzgerald . . . who was in the Four Courts and afterwards fought with the First Southern Division in Kerry?"

Padraig muttered an affirmative. Mary MacManus looked at him, a sharp question in her eyes; but before she could frame it Maurice Doyne broke in.

"Are you not going to speak to me, you impossible woman?" he asked.

"It gives me no pleasure at all to shake your hand, Maurice Doyne; but Liam told me you were here, and so I suppose I must recognize you."

"Thank you for nothing," said Doyne.

"And how are you feeling since they put that play of yours out of action?"

"Just the way I suppose any man feels who lives among savages. Were you one of the mob?"

"I was not, but if your play was as dirty and as blasphemous and as vile a slander on Ireland as I hear it was I'd have been proud to help damn it."

"Ireland!" Doyne jeered. "It's marvellous the way you and your friends manage to believe you're the whole of Ireland. Laugh at *you*, and begod, it's Ireland who is being laughed at."

The announcement that dinner was served interrupted the battle that was beginning; but presently at the table a remark of Doyne's about the censorship started it off again.

"Ireland has a responsibility . . ." Mary MacManus began.

"I thought so. Ireland has a responsibility," Doyne interrupted. "Three or four priests and schoolmasters get together and decide that some book published in England isn't fit for a convent parlour and this is presented to the rest of the world as Ireland's opinion. Most of the books forbidden to circulate in this country would never have been heard of outside small literary coteries without this ad-

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vertisement. But I don't object so much to the censorship of foreign books, because it is so incompetent that it usually doesn't begin to work until all the copies of the book the Irish booksellers can get rid of over the counter have been bought. What I do object to is the way the censorship kills the native artist. George Moore was right when he said that no Catholic can be a great writer and remain a Catholic."

"Are writers great only when they write filth?" Mary MacManus asked.

"Ah, don't be silly, Mary. You know as well as I do you're begging the whole big question with that idiotic small question of your own. A writer can't hope to be great unless he feels he is free to treat life as it is."

"You mean as he sees it, which is not necessarily what it is," Mary MacManus retorted.

"All right, then, as he sees it, if you like, and if a man can't see life whole he's not a great writer. What would a priest in the box say if I knelt down at the grille and strung off my sins till I came to the sixth"—he stopped to look round. . . . "We're all Catholics here. I don't have to explain that we call the seventh commandment the sixth . . . and then said, 'I'm sorry, father, but I'll have to cut out the next instalment because it mightn't be good for morals.' Wouldn't he have a right to tell me it was his duty to see life whole and would I get on with my sins and not keep the next penitent waiting about in the draught? Sure he would, and he'd be right."

"I don't see the faintest connection between a priest's duty in the confessional and a writer's duty in the pages of a book," Mary MacManus declared.

"The point is that if a writer deliberately runs away from handling a scene which he feels is vital to his presentation because it may have the wrong effect on some reader whose attention he never wanted, he is surrendering to being controlled by a less intelligent organism than himself."

"What's that got to do with a priest in the confessional?" Mary MacManus persisted.

"Hasn't one of the chief Protestant criticisms of auricular confession been the supposed effect the mention of certain sins must have on priest and penitent alike?" Doyme asked. "I only make as much demand for the integrity of an artist as I'm prepared to

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grant to the integrity of a priest. Did you ever read James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Mary?"

"Indeed no, and I would not open it," she answered.

"It's worth a glance just to see the result of the Irish clergy's preoccupation with the problem of trying to make their flocks compete with Adam and Eve before the fall. In my opinion they're tainted through and through with Jansenism."

"With Jansenism?" the host exclaimed in astonishment. "I never heard that accusation laid against them."

"No, nor anyone else," Mary MacManus scoffed. "He's just standing on his head to show our British visitor what a wonderful man he is. What do *you* know about Jansenism anyway, Maurice Doyne?"

"I know it was some pestilent kind of cryptopuritanism of which I've seen all too many signs in Ireland long enough, and which with Dev at the head of affairs will be encouraged to flourish."

"Well, God knows I'm no supporter of Dev," said the host, "but Mary and I declared a truce about Dev for to-night and I must rule him out of the conversation, Maurice."

"I don't want to talk about Dev," Doyne insisted. "But here's Ogilvie with dreams of a Scottish Free State, maybe of a Scottish Republic, and as a fellow-dramatist I just wanted to impress on him the glory of our Irish freedom. I'm sure every Scottish author will enjoy having his books submitted to a couple of Presbyterian ministers and three schoolmasters before they're allowed to circulate."

"Do you think Ireland won some of her freedom for the sake of a few writers?" asked Mary MacManus.

"I was condemned to death and then to penal servitude for life in 1916," Maurice Doyne pointed out. "So was Liam here."

"Yes, and then neither of you put out a finger or said a word to save Rory O'Connor or Liam Mellows or my brother Colum. It was bad enough the way you turned on those who'd fought beside you in 1916 at the bidding of your English masters. That boy's father was one of those you turned on." She looked across the table at Pdraig, who frowned slightly at the prominence he was being accorded. "But to shoot in cold blood men like my brother who were your prisoners . . . and the way you murdered Erskine Childers just to please Winston Churchill who was providing you with the guns and ammunition to crush the Republicans . . . that

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was cowardly . . . that was unforgivable . . .”

“I always argued against that,” said O’Falvey..

“Yes, but Kevin O’Higgins outargued you and you none of you had the pluck to stand up to him.”

“O’Higgins voted according to his conscience,” Doyme growled. “Do you think he enjoyed signing the warrant for the man who’d been his best man at his wedding?”

“He signed it, though,” Mary MacManus retorted bitterly.

“Because he believed that Ireland required peace above everything else,” Doyme went on. “There are others, Mary, besides you Republicans who can think of Ireland as a whole. And anyway, you and yours murdered Kevin O’Higgins. That wasn’t so brave a deed at all. To shoot an unarmed man on the way back from Mass. But I’ll tell you this, Mary, if I’d known in 1916 that I was offering my life to make Ireland a cul-de-sac I would never have come out.”

“Och, I don’t believe you mean that, Maurice,” the host protested.

“Begod, I mean it,” Doyme avowed.

“Ah, well, I’d do the same again,” O’Falvey declared, “even if I knew it would mean Dev and his party being in power for the rest of my life.”

“That’s because you were in the Government, Liam,” said Doyme. “You’ve had ten years of it, and you haven’t noticed yet what’s happening to Ireland. Yes, to Ireland, Mary, which you and your lot claim to take round with you on a lead. You’re all moaning about the partition, but there’s something just as bad for a nation as partition, and that’s contraction. I tell you I’m frightened of the way we’re contracting, and if there’s one thing certain it is that a clear majority for Dev at the end of this month will mean an opportunity for more rapid contraction than anything we’ve experienced yet.”

“Maurice, please,” the hostess begged. “Do let’s finish our dinner without any more arguments; you shall argue after dinner again if you want to.”

The wind had risen during dinner, and when the company gathered round the blazing log-fire in Liam O’Falvey’s library up-

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stairs it was booming round the house and the rain's musketry was loud against the panes of the tall windows.

"The West's awake to-night," John said. "The West," he murmured to himself reflectively.

Mary MacManus's deep eyes narrowed and her lips tightened as she looked up at him from her armchair on the other side of the fire.

"I'm going to start another argument," he went on. "What's the use of coming to Ireland without enjoying battles of words? I didn't tell you before, but I saw De Valera yesterday."

There were exclamations of astonishment from the assembled company.

"Amusing and witty fellow, isn't he?" Doyne growled.

"Ah, shut up, Maurice," his host urged impatiently. "What impression did he make on you?" he asked, turning to John.

"I think the dominant impression was goodness . . ."

"Goodness!" roared Doyne. "And him as cunning as a crow, as solemn as a rook, and as vain as a jackdaw. Don't make me laugh, Ogilvie."

"Maurice, Maurice, let the man tell us what *he* thought. We all know what you think about Dev," O'Falvey reprimanded.

Mary MacManus lit a cigarette, and as she tossed the match into the fire it suggested that she was tossing Doyne's opinion of De Valera with it.

"I use the word 'goodness' in its literal sense," John said. "He may be pedantic. He may be narrow. He may be humourless. I'm not qualified to express an opinion; but I think goodness is something that communicates itself immediately. And that was the impression which prevailed over everything else. He spoke first about the wrong of partition, and I told him he did not have to spend time convincing me of that. He insisted that real friendship between Ireland and England was impossible so long as the British Government maintained and sustained the policy of Partition. I told him I didn't have to be convinced of that either, and then I asked him point-blank what his reaction would be to a republic in Scotland—a Gaelic republic, I stressed—coming into existence during the next ten years. He smiled. By the way, he has a particularly charming smile."

"Oh, he can turn on that grin of his like the electric light," said

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Doyme. "And turn on the gab like a gas-fire."

"Do let somebody else talk, Maurice," Mary MacManus begged wearily.

"He smiled and said, 'I don't think there's much likelihood of that,'" John resumed. "'There wasn't much likelihood of your sitting where you are now ten years ago, Mr President,' I told him. 'And sixteen years ago it wouldn't have been considered a possibility by the wildest stretch of imagination.' He smiled again. 'I think the Scots have long ago lost any sense of separate nationhood,' he said. 'And that applies equally to the Welsh. They have become part of England.' 'Yet there were more native Gaelic-speakers in Scotland than there were in Ireland ten years ago. And many more native Welsh speakers. You attach importance to the influence of language on national consciousness. Moreover,' I went on, 'let's leave probability out of the question for the moment. If such a republic did materialize, what would be your economic attitude towards it? Would you be willing to enter into a reciprocal trading agreement?' 'What could you give us that we haven't already got ourselves?' 'Surely coal,' I said; 'and if, as I understand, it is to be your economic policy to develop and encourage Irish industry, coal will become of considerable importance.' 'We have our own coal in Ireland,' he declared. I must have looked incredulous, for he added 'when it is worked.' 'I shouldn't presume to contradict you, Mr President,' I said, 'but I had always supposed that Irish coal was hardly distinguishable from lignite. However . . .' And then I went on to say that it was a cherished plan of the Scottish Nationalists when they reached power to construct a ship-canal between Leith and Glasgow. 'And that would mean an opening for Irish trade with Eastern Europe. That would mean Ireland could share with a revived Scotland in importing corn from Russia.' 'But we can grow most of the wheat we want,' he insisted. 'I'm having experiments made in Limerick, and it is estimated that with an addition of eight per cent of Manitoba wheat . . .' 'But, Mr President,' I interrupted, 'I am presuming that these two Gaelic republics—Alba and Eire—are cut off from the benefits of Canadian wheat on account of their unsatisfactory attitude to the British Commonwealth of Nations. I don't think the cut-off would last for long, but a National Government such as we now enjoy in Britain might try the experiment for a while in

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the hope of subduing our inclination to act independently. You've just seen what a National Government can do in the way of cutting off their noses to spite their face with these duties on Irish cattle and dairy produce. And in Scotland we've not yet forgotten the Darién Scheme. But leave wheat out of it. If Ireland would support Scotland, and if both countries would support Norway, we might obtain that 13-mile limit which would preserve our fisheries and strengthen our economic position immensely. And finally, can you imagine, Mr President, a deadlier blow to Partition than a self-governing Scotland? I cannot believe Partition would last a year after that.' 'Ah, well, Mr Ogilvie,' he said, 'we'll have to discuss these matters *when* Scotland is a republic, and that, in my opinion, is not within the bounds of the most remote probability—I think I would say possibility.' So that was that.

"Now, obviously you couldn't expect De Valera to give a wandering crank the faintest excuse to claim that his subversive activity had received the least encouragement from the head of the Irish Government. All the same, I think we Scottish Nationalists have a right to expect a measure even of that slightly condescending interest which the Irish occasionally show in the affairs of their neighbours. Very occasionally, I may add. I do hope that when De Valera gets his clear majority he will aim beyond what seems to me a trend toward parochialism. Mind you, I sympathize with the suspicion the Cosgrave Government has incurred by being too easy with England, and I'm sure that if I were an Irishman I would be a wholehearted member of Fianna Fail. But I think I should be asking myself by now what part Ireland was to play in the future of Europe. I distrust profoundly this inclination to look toward Germany because, I suppose, the fact that England was at war with Germany gave Ireland her opportunity."

"We looked toward France when France was England's enemy," said Mary MacManus.

"So we did in Scotland, and if France had defeated England neither Scotland nor Ireland would have lost anything. Indeed, our two countries would probably have gained a great deal, both intellectually and materially. But Germany! I don't think you appreciate in Ireland what a German domination of Europe would mean. Your own independence would be useless to you."

So mighty a gust roared round the house as John spoke that all

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involuntarily looked toward the high curtains of brown brocade that veiled the windows.

"Only the west wind would remain free," John said.

"We demand back our own harbours," cried Mary MacManus, "which the Free Staters handed over to England. That was why we fought against the Treaty. We believed that Ireland had been betrayed."

"Ah, don't let's start that argument again, Mary," O'Falvey protested. "The people of Ireland gave us a majority to accept the Treaty. The country has had ten years to recover from the war with England, and it's easier now to throw mud at the Treaty and those who supported it. The country isn't faced with the immediate and dreadful alternative Griffiths and Collins had to face. Dev will get his clear majority. No doubt of it. Ogilvie here thinks he may start to lay the foundations of that wonderful Ireland of which we all dream, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael alike. Personally I have my doubts, and I think if Ogilvie comes back ten years hence he'll find us just about pretty much where we are now. And I can't pretend I'm sorry. I think Ireland has to be a stabilizing spiritual force in a Europe that's falling over itself with one political and economic experiment after another. It may be a cul-de-sac, but I'd rather it were that than a main drain."

"You ought to be in Fianna Fail, Liam," Mary MacManus told him. "You're out of your element with Cosgrave and his lot."

"I'm like Ireland. I don't change," said O'Falvey.

Maurice Doyne groaned loudly and leaned back in his deep armchair, wagging his beard at the ceiling.

"I see I'm doomed to become an exile. I'll have to go and live in a Dorset cottage like Stephen MacKenna or take a house at Wembley like Shamus . . ."

"James Stephens?" John put in.

"Yes, yes, that same leprechaun. You'd better come with me, Liam. You'll write your history of scholasticism with an added relish, for thinking of Stephen MacKenna toiling away with Plotinus on the other side of a hedge of hollyhocks. Mary, Mary, without being too contrary, tell me what there is to keep me in Ireland. If I write a book it can't be circulated because it casts reflections upon the intellectual eminence of the secular clergy or upon the purity of our Irish womanhood. If I write a play which

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suggests that God Almighty won't stand for the I.R.A. shooting up Paradise there's a riot every time it is performed. When I put my rifle over my shoulder and marched to the Post Office I thought I was marching to freedom, and death meant no more than lighting another cigarette. And when the court-martial sentenced me to be shot I just thought 'you poor bloody fools', and when I was reprieved and given penal servitude for life, that was just another cigarette, it meant so little; because I was offering myself dead or alive for Ireland's freedom. Well, it seemed to me that with the Treaty we got as much freedom as we knew what to do with until we had digested it. If Mary MacManus wasn't here I'd say that it was only De Valera's mortification at finding he was no longer President of the Irish Republic which . . ."

"That's not true," Mary MacManus cried, almost springing from her chair like a flame that suddenly leaps from a dark coal.

"All right, you are here, and so I won't say it. Anyway, before we knew where we were Tweedledum and Tweedledee agreed to have a battle about a nice new rattle. Only it turned into something more serious. Friend against friend. Brother against brother. Con was killed. So Corny had to be killed. Micky was ambushed. So Danny had to be ambushed. Pat was put on the spot. So Shamus had to be put on the spot. And then it began all over again. Shamus had been put on the spot. So Sean had to be put on the spot. Every rump-fed British politician getting up and patting himself on the back and justifying the Tans and the Auxies because the Staters and the Irregulars were butchering one another faster than Sir John Anderson and Sir Hamar Greenwood and Mr Lloyd George could butcher the two of them together. Well, it came to an end at last, and the birth of a nation was celebrated at the Tailtean Games, and since then, what? Just a dreary decline into parochialism and provincialism and municipal jobbery and middle-class mediocrity, which will now be speeded up by the Party of Destiny. And god, what a destiny! What are we aiming at? Will you tell me that, Mary MacManus, instead of sitting there looking like Atropos yourself?"

"Our destiny," she said coldly.

"Sinn Fein. We ourselves. We, we, we! God, woman, there's no magic in the first person plural by itself. It wants 'you' and 'they' to give it any dignity. • All the first violins in the world

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playing by themselves can't make a symphony."

"But Ireland may be a conservative force 'round which, if Europe crashes to ruins, Europe can rebuild itself," said John. "It happened before when Ireland was preserved from the darkness which descended on Europe after the fall of Rome. If we think of the future as Christians, and we all of us in this room do, are we not entitled to believe the Divine wisdom has set Ireland apart to fulfil His plan? There is a similar feeling in Poland. Aren't you making the mistake, Doyne, of thinking in years instead of decades or even centuries? I may seem to be contradicting what I said just now about Ireland's part in the future of Europe. Partly that may have been pique at the utter lack of interest here for what Scot and is struggling—very feebly, I admit—to aim at, and partly I am uneasy about this inclination to regard Germany as a civilizing influence which should be cultivated. But I *am* conscious whenever I come to Ireland of a spiritual refreshment and *pace* my friend Doyne of an immense potential vitality beyond the actual vitality, which I must insist I also feel strongly."

"I don't," said Padraig, blushing as all eyes turned upon him.

"Why's that, Padraig?" his host asked, with an encouraging twinkle.

"Well, it's so out of everything," the boy replied. "It seems so . . . well . . . so petty."

"The wild geese will still be flying," Maurice Doyne muttered into his beard.

And round the house the west wind boomed and roared, blowing towards Europe.

John thought his father was looking suddenly much older when he reached Hampstead at the end of January; but on a hint from Elise he was careful not to comment on that to the Judge himself.

"I've enjoyed this peep I've had at my eldest granddaughter," Sir Alexander said to his son when they were established in the library about ten o'clock according to custom. "She seems to have made the most of her Christmas holidays. She tells me you're taking her to France this year."

"That's the plan."

"And flying, eh?"

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"I must make a start sometime," John said.

The Judge shook his head.

"It still seems to me a formidable kind of adventure," he commented.

"Well, to be candid, so it does to me," John admitted. "But I don't think at fifty I can afford to postpone it any longer. I shall be protected against qualms by the confidence of youth. I'm counting on Corinna's being able to convince me that it's as natural to be up in the air to-day as it seemed natural to me once upon a time to invest in a free-wheel bicycle against the advice of my seniors."

"I suppose it's a sign of senescence, if not of absolute senility," the Judge said, "that I'm tempted to think the mind of man is not speeding up at the pace required by the ever-increasing mobility of his body."

"I'm quite sure it isn't," John agreed. "And I refuse to admit I'm anywhere near to senescence."

"You know, John," his father continued, "I believe we've made a mistake with this National Government of ours. I thought like the great majority of the country that we wanted to balance our budget, move cautiously, husband our resources, and in fact go slow. But I'm beginning to wonder if we can afford to go slow. When you get a woolly man like Ramsay MacDonald, and a lazy man like Baldwin, and a dull honest fellow like Neville Chamberlain, and a professional lawyer like Simon habituated for years to reaching an agreement satisfactory to both parties out of court, you have a dangerously accommodating combination, especially when they have a tail of second-rate junior ministers . . . indeed perhaps second-rate is an overestimate of their class . . . too many of whom, perceiving the low level at the top, are preoccupied now with the notion of becoming Prime Ministers themselves one day."

"I couldn't agree with you more," John declared. "But what has suddenly given you this disquiet about the future? I remember not so long ago you were in favour of caution and didn't accept my description of it as drifting."

"I suppose it's like your decision to fly to France with your daughter, John. I have a sudden longing to do some mental flying . . ." He smiled. "I was depressed the other night by a conversation at the National Liberal Club. The subject was Winston Churchill, and I was really taken aback by the fear with which he

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fills our leading politicians and civil servants. They seemed to huddle together at the thought of him as coolies might huddle together at the news of a man-eating tiger in the neighbourhood, or as docile and respectable elephants might contemplate a rogue. And as I was driving back from the Club, which I very, very rarely visit nowadays, such a hideous mausoleum is it of a dead party, as I was driving home, I say, I was suddenly struck by an alarming question. If, I said to myself, these men can be frightened by the strangeness of Winston Churchill, what will be the effect upon them of this queer fish Hitler, who will seem very much stranger to them than Winston in his most destructive mood? . . . yes, it just occurred to me, John, that these fellows in charge of the country are not up to the job. They are not equipped to handle these new forces which have been released in Europe by the war."

"Well, as I said, I couldn't agree with you more," John repeated. "Why don't you retire from the Bench and utter a solemn warning to the country?"

"My dear boy, the only effect of such a step by one of His Majesty's Judges would be to convince the people of this country that for some time past the administration of the law had been at the mercy of a lunatic. No, no, it's too late for me to contemplate flying."

"I'm glad to find my own misgivings about the future confirmed by you," John told his father. "And of course you're quite right about what would be the effect of your suddenly playing Jeremiah. The people of this country insist on regarding the part as a comic role. You'd be called the Gloomy Judge and starred by the Press with Dean Inge. Bernard Shaw knows well enough how inevitable it is for a prophet of woe to be regarded as a funny man. So he laughs first, and therefore irritates and incidentally stimulates the man in the street much more than somebody like the Gloomy Dean."

"I see De Valera whom you so much admire has had a decisive victory in the Irish General Elections," the Judge went on. "What do you suppose he will make of it?"

"Politics in Ireland are so much complicated by personal animosities. I suppose they are everywhere, but we've gone much further along the way to formalism, don't you think? Too far, I think, sometimes. It may be a sign of devitalization. I do believe

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that that's above all what we have to contend against in this country. It seems to me prevalent in everything from politics to football, from religion to the drama. I'm told it's most apparent in France also. I suppose it's post-war exhaustion. It's ironical that the beaten nation like Germany and the disappointed nation like Italy should display so much more vitality than ourselves or the French."

"You think there's a lot of vitality in Germany?" So do I," the Judge agreed. "But I don't find any nervousness of that among the people with the direction of our affairs. Churchill is afraid of it. I suppose it takes vitality to recognize vitality. By the way, I meant to ask you about David. Do you believe in this cinema business of his?"

"Yes, I do. We had a great argument about it when he was up on the island with me last spring. I held out for the theatre, but in my heart I believe the young man's right. I think the future of dramatic art does lie with the films."

"What a horrible thought! I only once visited one of these what they call picture theatres," said the Judge. "I was completely baffled by the whole thing. Yes, that's what worries me about this Government we have at present. There's a different approach to life nowadays, and I don't believe these fellows are aware of it. I don't understand the modern attitude toward life, but I don't profess to. Fortunately I only have to administer the law. I don't have to make it. Even as it is I'm thinking of retiring next year, when I shall be eighty. I must confess I'm just beginning to feel a little tired. I shouldn't mind on my own account, but it's not fair on litigants or criminals. Did you see I had one of my sentences quashed by the Court of Appeal last autumn?"

"I didn't notice that."

"Yes, they said there had been misdirection of the jury on one point. And after my annoyance had worn off I came to the conclusion that I *had* misdirected the jury. I must say I dislike these hermaphrodite juries we have nowadays. I suppose you'll think time's wingèd chariot has dropped me into a ditch, but you know, John, I do believe the award of political power to women is the sign of a decadent Imperium. Women are not sensible about politics. They really are not. They are too material in their outlook. They detest experiment. They are small-minded in fact. That some women should vote and even be given office in

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the Government I can accept, but from the moment universal suffrage was given to men women had to be given the same sooner or later. And now here we are! That enfranchisement of young women by Baldwin was a cunning move. It added to the Conservative vote another volume of uneducated opinion."

"What is the cause of these anti-feminine sentiments which I've never heard you utter before?" John asked his father.

"I think it's my experience on the Bench, John. The habitual female criminal is definitely not quite human. I'm not suggesting that the habitual female criminal is representative of womanhood. But she is a voter, and if you had seen as much of such creatures as I have, John, you would be gravely perturbed by the thought that these partially human beings might have the power to decide an election."

"There aren't so many female criminals as all that," John said. "And I doubt if many of them exercise the privilege of voting, anyway."

"No, that may be; but one has to ask oneself whether the process of the female mind as revealed to me in the dock may not be widely diffused, in which case the prospect before this country is extremely dark. I think it was Pope who said every woman was at heart a rake. I don't know about that, but I do think it is possible to say every woman is at heart a law-breaker, and though I know you are inclined to pooh-pooh the law, you'll find, John, that from the moment feminine contempt for the law asserts itself this nation will sharply and rapidly decline. Fundamentally it is our respect for law and order which has made us a great nation. Cynics laughed when the Labour leaders were genuinely distressed to hear that a General Strike was illegal. But what a tribute to them it should have been considered! I beg you when you are educating my granddaughter not to undermine her respect for law and order, indeed I beg you will do something less negative than that, which is to build up her reverence for it. After all, the foundations of the law I administer are more ancient than the moral law imparted by any Christian teacher in any Christian Church. It was the law which gave ancient Rome supremacy, and the effective authority of your Church, whatever Divine authority it may claim, is derived from its inheritance from that city built seven centuries before Christ was born. I'm told there is a likelihood of the Catholic

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voters in Germany turning towards this man Hitler when, as he must, he tries to reinforce this chancellorship which that battered old figurehead Hindenburg has just given him with a popular endorsement. Should this turn out a true forecast I believe that Roman Catholics will have struck the greatest blow at the authority of their Church since the Germans launched the Reformation, because they will be striking at law and order."

"I agree," said John. "But German Catholics have always resented equality with other nations within the Church. They most of them feel that the Tudors stole a march on them in dealing with the Papacy."

"No doubt you are surprised to hear me referring to the Reformation as a disaster," the Judge went on. "I am not considering being received into your Church on my deathbed, John. Do not imagine that. But as a believer in the law I do think that the Reformation was a major disaster for Europe. I am not concerned with matters of faith or superstition. I am not even convinced of my own personal survival after death in the way I should have to be convinced of a man's guilt before I sentenced him even to a term of imprisonment. That spiritual aspect of the Reformation is another matter. I would not venture to express an opinion about that. I regard it purely from the legal point of view and I repeat that from that point of view it appears to me as a disaster.

"And I regard as pregnant with equal disaster this worldwide tendency at the moment to despise law. This vulgar showman Mussolini, who for some reason I fail to comprehend is so much admired by so many of our present Government, including that unstable creature Ramsay MacDonald himself, is the most deplorable caricature of those ancient Romans he affects to reproduce in his Fascist State. Indeed, the whole of modern Italy is a deplorable caricature not only of ancient Rome but also of its better self. I am old enough to have thrilled as a boy to Garibaldi's visit to London. I actually saw him once, at Chiswick of all places. I was hardly ten at the time, but I have the clearest recollection of the occasion. As a young man devoted to Mr Gladstone I saw, like him, in United Italy a perpetual pledge of liberalism's ultimate triumph. And who was a greater upholder of the law than Mr Gladstone? It is the fashion to sneer at Mr Gladstone now, I understand. What other statesman has this country produced who has had a

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mind which always preserved its capacity for progressive thought until the end of a very long life, so that at eighty he was a more ardent reformer than he was at eighteen? But always with reverence for the law and with regard for order.

"So don't pooh-pooh the law, John. You may some day have to make a decision whether to bow to law and order or defy it. I seem, I don't know why I'm sure, to be suddenly apprehensive of the future. Oh, not for myself, but for the world. I know that you have plans for Scotland. I know that you sympathize very deeply with this Irish resurgence. I would not seem to discourage your aspirations toward vitality for individuals or for nations. But within the law. Within the law. Go outside the law and what do you substitute? An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The private vendetta. Faction. Civil strife. Expediency before right. Chaos at last." The Judge passed a pale hand across his forehead. "I don't know why I'm wandering on like this, my dear fellow. It's most unusual for me to chatter in this style. Get yourself a whisky. I think I'll be off to bed if you'll forgive me. I'm feeling rather tired. I can't imagine why."

"You're all right?" John asked, a little anxiously.

"Oh yes, perfectly all right. It's been delightful having Corinna here. I must say she has admirable manners. And Prudence's children have good manners too. People complain to me about the manners of the young, but I always say their bad manners seem to me much exaggerated. Well, if you'll look after yourself I think I'll get off to bed. Good-night, my dear fellow. Good-night."

And next morning when the Judge was called there was no answer to the knock. Sometime in the night he had died peacefully.

After the funeral Prudence suggested to John that he should ask Elise to come and spend some time with him on the island.

"I thought she was going back with you to Erpingham," he said.

"That is the present plan, but I'm sure Mother would be happier with a more complete change, John. She can come to us afterwards. David and I might fetch her."

The weather was kind when they reached the islands, and there was a week of windless February weather when the green spears

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of the daffodils unfrosted thrust themselves up toward the faint blue sky visibly longer it seemed every day, and here and there a wan rathe primrose opened close to the ground from disapproving leaves that wisely dallied. The hills on the mainland lay along the horizon like snowy frigates, lilyrosed each evening by halcyon sunsets. The ravens were nesting.

"How glad I am I came, John," Elise told him. "This peace brings me so near to your dear father. I am glad he had that last evening with you. He did so much enjoy those evenings with you. I wish he could have seen your island."

"He talked more than usual on that last night. Although he himself said he was by no means convinced of personal immortality I am much more convinced of it than ever from that conversation. He seemed to have a clarity of vision I never remember before. At any rate, I never remember his expressing it. And why should a mere body have such clarity of vision if the soul had not received its warning?"

"In this magical place enclosed by crystal I seem to fancy I am immortal, John; but I fear that belief will be blown away by the first wind. Do you never doubt, John?"

"I have doubted all my life. I have never been granted the grace of unquestioning faith; but I have been granted the grace of hope, and that is one of the three theological virtues which is apt to be overlooked by theologians."

"Why do you call it a theological virtue?"

"Because like faith and charity its object is God and because it is infused into our souls by Divine Grace. I may be teaching you heresy, Elise, but I must distinguish absolutely between faith and hope, and I cannot accept hope as dependent upon or even participative necessarily in faith. I believe that a Trinitarian analogy can be perceived in the three theological virtues."

"I'm afraid you're taking me out of my depth."

"Well, I perceive these Trinitarian analogies in so many forms. For instance, in art I see sculpture and painting as God the Father, poetry as God the Son, music as God the Holy Ghost. In Petrine Christianity which lasted till the Reformation I discern the Father; in Pauline Christianity in which we still are, the Son; in Johannine Christianity, which we await, the Holy Ghost. And I see in faith the Father, in hope the Son, and in charity the Holy Ghost. Please

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bear in mind that these are all analogies; they are not identities. I think the most rigid theologian would have to admit that God in His wisdom has not infused into humanity such an abundant grace of faith as to make it immune to the ever increasingly severe trials that material progress and added knowledge of the material universe impose upon it. At the same time, I continuously wonder at the corresponding abundance of the grace of hope and, as I think, an increase of the grace of charity."

"The war didn't look like that," Elise said.

"If you'll forgive me, that is too superficial an opinion. Yes, the war, like every war before it, was a sign of man's lack of clarity, but I do think that mankind has more charity now than it had in what is called the Age of Faith. It seems to me that every child of this age is born with what, leaving theology out of it, can be called a more natural predisposition to consider itself responsible for the amelioration of the general lot of mankind. There is an ever-growing sense of this social responsibility. It becomes continuously easier to carry through social reforms. We no longer accept the comfortable belief of a station of life arranged by God in the interest of the fortunate minority. We fortunate ones grow increasingly ashamed of our fortune, increasingly anxious for others to be as fortunate. That sense of shame and anxiety to be rid of it are in my belief the Divine grace of charity, and I can declare with all my mind that I hope in eternity I may be granted the Beatific Vision, although I am only too miserably aware that my faith in that Beatific Vision is always being assailed and shaken by the doubt of my own personal survival after death."

Elise shook her head.

"It was all such a long time ago, John," she sighed.

"What was?"

"Why, when all we're expected to believe happened. It's too much to expect of human beings."

"But don't you think the very fact that it was so long ago adds to the probability of truth rather than the reverse? Nearly two thousand years is a long time for a fantasy to endure."

"Ah, well, John, I'm afraid it's no use. I can't believe. I haven't even enough faith to hope it's true. I wish I had. I've had a happy life, and I would love to be able to go down on my knees and say 'thank you' to some ruling spirit of the universe."

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March' came roaring in with a south-west gale. The glass dropped. The midriff of everybody on the island felt like a parchment on which a nerve-wrecking tattoo was being incessantly drummed. The slates of the roof clapped: the chimneys boomed: the window-frames creaked: the doors fretted: the carpets bellied in the draught: the curtains swayed: every pane was netted with blades of grass ripped from the ground and smeared with clots of spume blown from the spindrift that went streaming by on the blast. The wind shifted to the west. Wild blue gaps were torn in the leaden clouds. Squall after squall shrieked in to the attack armed with hailstones that seemed heavy as grapeshot. The sun appeared to pour out its life in a mad effulgence of pale gold as it set, and all through the second night the maniac squalls raged one after another. On the third morning the wind shifted to the north-west. The wild gaps in the leaden clouds widened to washed fields of blue. The grey clouds themselves were marbled more and more with white. By afternoon the sky was like the matrix of turquoise; and at sunset, a rose-fumed blaze, the wind dropped.

"Phew!" Elise ejaculated. "I really began to believe it would never be quiet again."

Two or three days later the *Flora* arrived with an accumulation of mail.

"This new President has made a most remarkable speech to the people of the United States on his inauguration," John said, looking up from *The Times*. "It seems to me it might mark the beginning of an epoch. You must read it, Elise. I wish our aerial hadn't been blown down. We might have heard it. We were talking about hope the other day. Well, this speech has given me more hope for the political future than anything that's happened for a long time. This is a great man speaking. Do read it, Elise."

He passed *The Times* of March 5th and opened *The Times* of March 6th. He scowled.

"You'll want all the hope you can extract from that speech of Roosevelt's, Elise. The German elections have given the National Socialists seventeen million votes. The Catholics have been as much frightened by that fake firing of the Reichstag as the English Protestants by the Gunpowder Plot. Well, my father was right."

"How, John?"

"The night before he died he told me he had heard there was a

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likelihood of the German Catholics turning over their votes to Hitler, and he said if that should happen it might be found that they had struck the greatest blow against the authority of the Church since the German apostates of the Reformation. Well, it has happened. Six millions of them have decided that this cheap skate revivalist will save them from Bolshevism. And this is the moment that Ramsay MacDonald and Simon think they'll save the Disarmament Conference from collapsing by going to Geneva. Can they really suppose they will be taken seriously after that ignominious surrender to Japan last month? That was another thing my father talked of that last night. He saw clearly that this Government of ours is as much used in contemporary Europe as a duck quacking at a thunderstorm to frighten it away. Well, thank God, this man Roosevelt seems to be authentic metal. He doesn't suppose he can save the banks of America by cutting the school teachers' salaries."

"Strange," Elise murmured.

"What is strange?"

"Why, all the years of my married life I can never recall your being enthusiastic about your father's political views. It seems so tragic that just when you and he were beginning to see eye to eye about politics he should lose the pleasure of it. Because, you know, John, it would have been such a tremendous pleasure to him."

"Well, it wasn't so much a matter of agreeing as that he seemed to appreciate the reasons for my point of view and at the same time gave me an opportunity to appreciate his. It was really he who was doing the talking, not I for a wonder. All the same, Elise, I think he's happier out of what's coming. Eighty is too old to see the beginning of tremendous change, for one may be snatched from it and die, wondering."

"You think tremendous changes are on the way?"

"They must be, Elise. We live at the end of a cycle. I doubt if you or I will see the world's course set fair for another. Corinna may in her old age. But we ought to live long enough to see the great crisis through, because I think it will come sooner now than I once thought. When Russia failed to produce the equivalent of a Napoleon or a Caesar after Lenin's death I thought we might steer clear of another great war until round about 1960. We've

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had a Napoleoncello in Italy, but modern Italy isn't the France of the Revolution. This Hitler fellow may be another Napoleon, but he can only be one if we make it possible for him, and that was what was worrying my father about this Government we have. A nation that entrusts its future to the men in power at this moment is drawing pretty heavily on the goodwill of that Heaven which helps those who help themselves. However, perhaps I'm being pessimistic. Perhaps we shall take alarm from what has just happened in Germany. It's too soon to speculate; but the news of this turn over of votes in Germany after that curiously solemn warning my father seemed to utter on that last night of his life has given me a profound malaise. However, the speech of the new American President has been consoling. It was time democracy produced a man. It has been breeding dummies too long. Ventriloquist's dummies I mean, the ventriloquist being Money."

Two or three days after this conversation David came up to escort his mother south. Chicken-pox had appeared at Erpingham and Prudence could not leave her family.

"Julius and I are working at a film about Beethoven," he told John. "What about coming in with us?"

But John did not think the subject attracted him sufficiently to postpone his visit to France with Corinna.

"You're not going to France till May, are you?" David asked.

"It's no good, David. I don't feel the slightest desire to write words to music, which is what you're suggesting I shall do. If I get a subject for a film I'll let you know; but I should never be able to work on somebody else's idea."

The neon sign of Air France glowed with a kind of mystical modernity upon the sunlight of a May morning in Park Lane, that hybrid of old and new London. The unweighty luggage with which John and his daughter were equipped for the plane from Croydon to Le Bourget was stacked away at the back of the motor-coach. They took their seats. The trees of Hyde Park began to sweep past. The adventure had begun.

"This odd suburban prelude," John murmured.

"What did you say, Father?" asked his daughter, whose blue eyes had been gazing straight in front of her as if she feared a glance to

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either side might deflect the coach from its course and thus prevent its ever reaching the aerodrome.

"I was wondering where we were," he said.

"Streatham," a fellow-passenger in front turned round to inform him.

The long panorama of villaedom was at last unrolled. The coach entered the aerodrome. Concrete efficiency. Tarmac neatness. Spreading green. Great planes here and there, their tails upon the trim well-regulated earth, their noses tilted at the unbounded pairie of the sky. Tabs and tickets and passports all in order. A sense of effort in reaching one's seat in the sloping suddenly-coned space within the plane.

"I feel just as I felt when I was sitting in my first switchback," John told his daughter.

"How old were you?"

"About six."

Corinna frowned.

"I think it's more of an adventure to fly when you're twelve than to go on a switchback when you're six," she decided firmly.

"It's much more of an adventure to fly for the first time when you're fifty," John assured her. "Believe you me."

"You're not frightened, are you?" she asked in accents that combined a faint anxiety for her parent's ease of mind with a faint anxiety that he might be going to disgrace her in front of the other passengers by an exhibition of poltroonery.

"I don't think I'd go so far as to call it fright," she was told. "But I'll be glad when we've left the ground and I know what it feels like."

The noise of the propeller roared.

"Father, we're off the ground," Corinna cried. Her hands were clenched in an ecstasy. Her wide eyes were a part of the cloudless sky. "The ground's just floating down from underneath us."

The steward came along to enquire about refreshment. John looked at the card.

"Bring me a half-bottle," he said, pointing to a brand of champagne. "Would you like some ginger-ale, Corinna?"

She shook her head.

"No, I just want to look out of the window," she murmured in a rapt voice.

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Soon they were over Sussex.

One of the passengers on the other side of the gangway leaned across to say to a friend in a jovial resonant voice:

"We shall be over Gambles in a minute. I wonder if my maids are giving a garden-party. Yes, by Jove, they are," he added presently, looking down from his window. "All of 'em sitting about on the lawn dressed up like butterflies."

On over Sussex and then suddenly the coast writing itself in a long flourish beside the sea. What was that jolly little jumble of buildings? Hastings? Impossible. Yes, it was Hastings.

"I never realized before what an appropriate description watered silk was," John said to Corinna.

"I feel quite sorry for the sea," she told him.

"Why?"

"It looks so small and weak from here."

"You tell that to the sea at Tigh nan Ròn," he challenged.

And now that insignificant strip of sea was behind them, that insignificant strip which had influenced so profoundly the whole development of Europe, that blue and silver sleeve of sea into which was thrust the mighty arm of history.

Over France now. The pattern of the carpet had changed. The small intricate Axminster design had been succeeded by the more spacious Aubusson. Tracts of light green land with here and there great formal bunches of trees. But oh, an unprotected land. Beheld thus, how easy it was to sympathize with that perpetual French apprehension which so much irritated the English behind their hedgerows, who, lulled by that insignificant strip of sea, could not understand why the French always imagined that the Germans were preparing to attack them.

The plane circled over the aerodrome of Le Bourget and banked steeply before coming down. John saw that the other passengers accepted this dangerous-looking operation impassively and made up his mind not to presume the plane was on the point of turning right over and crashing to earth.

"I wish the journey had been longer," Corinna sighed when they walked toward the *douane*, which was not in the least like the old customs shed of Calais or Dover, but resembled a pavilion in some *exposition universelle*.

The four or five miles from Le Bourget through the squalid

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north-east outskirts of Paris to the reception bureau might have been an anticlimax if John had not been reflecting gratefully on a safe landing and if Corinna's thoughts had not been still up in the sky far from this shabby townscape through which the equally shabby motor-coach was hooting its way. At the reception bureau they got into a taxi and drove to the hotel in the Rue Castiglione where they were staying.

"Now I really do know I have reached Paris," John said as the taxi-driver by grinding his brakes just managed to avoid knocking over half a dozen pedestrians and exploded in throaty Parigot oaths.

From the hotel John went to meet Mairi Macdonald with the luggage at the Gare du Nord.

"Corinna enjoyed her flight," he told her.

"I'm sure she would be enjoying it," said Mairi. "Not a day has gone by since you promised her she would be flying to France but she would be talking about it."

"What was the crossing like?"

"It was pretty good, sir."

"Only pretty good? The Channel looked like silk from the plane."

"Och, it wasn't what anybody would call really rough, but I was quite glad when we were ashore. Corinna isn't after being sick?" she asked in sudden anxiety.

"No, no, but I thought she'd better rest quietly at the hotel to get over the excitement instead of coming to meet you."

"Indeed, I'm sure that is just what she ought to be doing, sir," Mairi agreed.

